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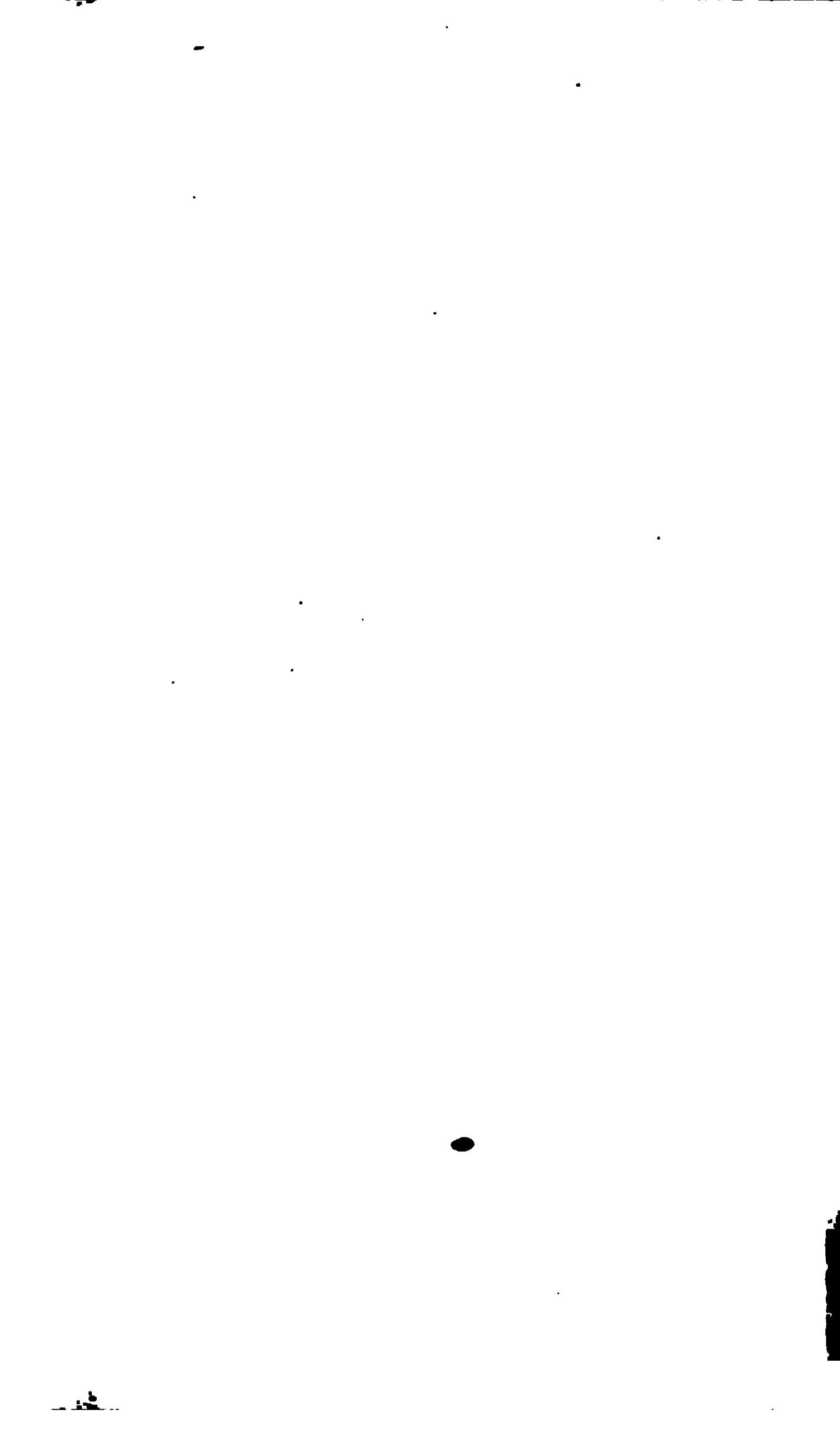
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THE
CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

—
A TALE.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.



THE
CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

A Portuguese Tale,

**FROM A MANUSCRIPT LATELY FOUND BY A BRITISH OFFICER
OF RANK IN AN OLD MANSION IN PORTUGAL.**

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Not e'en the soldier's fury, rais'd in war,
The rage of tyrants, when defiance stings 'em,
The pride of priests, so bloody when in power,
Are half so dreadful as a woman's vengeance.

SAVAGE.

VOL. I.



London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

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1819.



TUE

Castle of Villa-Flora.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW miles from the town of Aveiro, in the province of Beira, in the kingdom of Portugal, until lately stood, upon the summit of a hill, the gothic Castle of Villa-Flora. Its immediate environs were almost deserted by the superstitious peasantry of the country, who were alarmed by stories of their own fabrication, and who would rather

brave the utmost visible danger, than approach those ancient walls, that had been raised by the orders of feudal tyranny and oppression. The Castle was backed towards the east by a vast and gloomy forest, which was indebted for the majestic growth of its trees to a succession of undisturbing ages, and which likewise extended itself towards the north upon a chain of mountains, bounded by grey and elevated rocks. Towards the south the eye agreeably reposed upon wild and rural valleys, upon gentle eminences covered with vineyards, and upon scattered woods and innumerable hamlets; whilst the western prospect was terminated by the boundless immensity of the ocean.

Since the death of Leontio, the last marquis of Villa-Flora, the Castle had
been

been inhabited only by the young Amelina, his daughter, under the guidance of her aunt, donna Lucia, the surviving sister of Leontio.

Gerardo, an aged porter in the family, and a cook of the name of Mareetosa, also far advanced in years, were the only servants in the Castle; but their zeal and vigilance amply supplied the want of additional attendants. Mareetosa had the entire care of the interior of the Castle, whilst the more laborious employments were entrusted to Gerardo, who went twice a-week to Aveiro to purchase provisions, which he conveyed home upon the backs of two stout mules, kept entirely for that service.

In the midst of the most profound solitude, donna Lucia and her niece had never experienced the slightest

symptom of tediousness. The former, having passed her youth in the tumult of courts and cities, despised the world too much to have the smallest regret at having quitted it; and Amelina, who had but a very imperfect knowledge of it, had little wish to be better acquainted with it. Their excursions were confined to an annual visit to Aveiro, to receive the money that a banker at Lisbon remitted for the use of donna Lucia; and they occasionally went to the Carmelite convent of Santa Maria, about five miles from the Castle, to acquit themselves of their religious duties. No one was ever seen to wander over the uninhabited lands of Villa-Flora, and the only visitor at the Castle was father Jeromio, the confessor of the family, and director of the nuns of Santa Maria.

Amelina

Amelina submitted to this seclusion without reluctance; she had been accustomed to it from her infancy, and besides, her mode of life was so agreeable, and her time so much occupied, that it would have been difficult for her to desire or envy those unknown pleasures, which had been represented to her as carrying with them nothing but disgust, satiety, and remorse. Having lost her parents almost at the moment of her birth, she had been placed under the guardianship of donna Lucia, who cherished her, not only as her niece, but as the sole offspring and representative of an ancient and illustrious family, that had once been extremely numerous; and the tender care and attentions shewn by the sister of the marquis to this amiable and interesting orphan had produced in

her grateful heart the same sentiments that a child cherishes in her bosom for a kind and affectionate mother.

Donna Lucia loved Amelina as fondly as if she had been her daughter; it was she who had educated her, who had moulded her disposition and formed her habits, and who had imprinted the characters of virtue upon her mind: it was not therefore surprising that she should be proud of her performance, when such flattering success crowned and terminated her labours. Her charming pupil was one of the handsomest as well as one of the most accomplished of women, and yet she was wholly ignorant that so many perfections and good qualities were united in her. To a form the most enchanting, and a countenance the most bewitching, Amelina added a heart full of

of susceptibility, but open only to the most innocent sensations; and if she could be accused of a defect, it was that of loving what are called marvellous tales, and all that carried with it a romantic or mysterious impression. She had contracted this singular taste partly by reading old Portuguese romances, but more especially by a constant residence upon a spot particularly calculated to inspire the most fanciful and extraordinary notions. But to a great stock of solid instruction she united the most pleasing talents, and all those resources that charm away many a painful feeling, and preserve us from that most disagreeable sensation of being weary of ourselves. Her apartment was decorated with a variety of landscapes, her masterly imitations from nature, representing the picturesque

environs of the Castle, and the different points of view under which that antique edifice presented itself. She spoke with ease and precision the Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and French languages, excelled upon the harp, sang with taste and feeling, and was perfect mistress of the various little works of skill and elegance that distinguish the well-educated female.

These precious resources, which Amelina possessed at the early age of seventeen, were the more astonishing, from their being wholly the result of the care and instructions of donna Lucia. That respectable woman was indeed extremely capable of superintending the education of her niece, for she had been herself brought up with the greatest care at Lisbon, under the inspection of the

the most distinguished masters, and had much frequented the courts both of Portugal and Spain ; and her patience, mildness, and experience, eminently qualified her for the performance of the interesting and important task she had undertaken.

Donna Lucia was nearly fifty years of age, and though her features bore the furrowed marks of the ravages of time, and especially of sorrow, they carried with them also the remains of beauty and amiability. Her mind, weighed down by misfortune, had in a great measure lost its original energy, and now possessed but one single affection capable of saving it from falling into total weakness. If grief and sorrowful retrospect sometimes clouded the brow of donna Lucia—if a painful recollection

occasionally caused her tears to flow, the ingenuous caresses of her Amelina quickly dried them up, and reproduced the native serenity of her countenance.

The four inhabitants of Villa-Flora occupied but a very small portion of the Castle, the rest of which, long since abandoned, was condemned to a stillness as mournful as the silence of the tomb.

After the decease of the marquis Leontio and his wife, donna Lucia quitted the sumptuous apartments they had inhabited, and retired to a less splendid part of the Castle, whose situation was more agreeable to her: all the avenues to the uninhabited part of the building were consequently shut up, and for upwards of fourteen years no one had penetrated into those melancholy regions, the witnesses of a thousand disastrous events,

events, amongst which is to be recorded the premature death of the unfortunate Leontio.

The Castle of Villa-Flora was composed of several vast and irregular edifices, forming by their distribution three spacious courts, connected together by six towers of ancient and massy structure: thick and lofty walls, with battlements flanked by small round towers, surrounded the building, which was accessible only by a gateway on the south side of the walls, that opened upon a long and majestic avenue of chesnut-trees, winding down the declivity of the hill; a drawbridge and deep ditches had formerly added to the safety of the Castle, but they had been long since suffered to decay, and a thick iron door

now closed the entrance we have described.

A dark and vaulted passage conducted into the first court, on each side of which was a pavilion of modern architecture; at the extremity of the court were two lofty towers, and between them a door and passage similar to the foregoing, leading immediately into the second court, where four towers, destined for the accommodation of servants, arose at the four corners, and gave an air of melancholy grandeur to the fabric. The chapel, a rich monument of gothic architecture, in which were interred the lords of Villa-Flora, was particularly distinguishable on the left side of the court, and magnificent stables entirely occupied the right. Iron palisadoes, richly

richly gilt and ornamented, separated this court from the third, which, still more spacious than the preceding, inclosed an immense central structure, with wings of no less considerable extent. These buildings contained, besides the requisite kitchens and offices, a countless number of apartments, corridors, and galleries, that had been decorated, according to their various uses, with all the heavy magnificence and tasteless splendour of the country and the times.

Alas! this residence of grandeur, which, during several centuries, had been the seat also of happiness—this superb edifice, which pride and ostentation had taken so much pains to ornament—this antique abode, where the accents of joy had so frequently resounded, now silent and

14 CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

and deserted, filled the mind with no other sentiments than those of sorrow and affright.

The pavilions in the first court were the only parts of the building that were inhabited; and all communication with the rest of the Castle was strictly forbidden by donna Lucia to her servants, and even to her niece. In one of the pavilions a kitchen and some small rooms composed the ground-floor, over which was donna Lucia's apartment, commodiously distributed, and elegantly furnished: that of Anselina was in the other pavilion, which possessed an advantage superior to her aunt's, in a charming belvedere that rose above the walls of the Castle, and commanded the view of the surrounding country. This was her favourite apartment, the place where

where she occupied herself in her several studies and amusements, and where she passed the most agreeable moments of her youth. The belvedere had four windows, each of which afforded a different prospect, and always enabled her to procure the various lights necessary for her improvement in painting. Her pavilion consisted only of an elevated ground-floor, that opened upon a terrace communicating with the pavilion of her aunt; on one side of a vestibule was a door leading to Amelina's bedroom, and on the other a pair of folding doors, that conducted through an elegant boudoir into an apartment fitted up as a library, which, though chiefly composed of the old romances of Spain and Portugal, contained some esteemed books of morality,

lity, science, history, and a variety of the choicest poets.

Donna Lucia having neglected, and even refused to repair the buildings in the inner courts, which even in the lifetime of Leontio had begun to fall into decay, they were now in a melancholy state of ruin and desolation. Those towards the north had principally, and indeed materially suffered—the worm-eaten and rotten roofs of several parts of the structure had fallen in; and the western tower, deprived of its battlements during a violent hurricane, now offered to the view a mighty and tottering ruin, ready at every blast to increase the rubbish in the courts by a sudden and tremendous downfall. The thorn, the thistle, the ivy, and all the tribe of wild

wild and creeping herbs, had long flourished in the courts, taken root in the crevices of the walls, and entwined themselves around the extensive ruins, that afforded a secure refuge to the noxious reptile, and the screaming and melancholy-inspiring bird of night.

How often did donna Lucia and her niece gaze with venerable admiration upon this awful mass, on which the hand and ravages of time were so forcibly impressed! Frequently did they seat themselves upon a hill that looked down upon the Castle and its domain, and observe the last rays of the sun feebly gild those relics of former grandeur, which the shades of the forest successively obscured, and which, in proportion as the twilight grew paler, assumed a darker and more gloomy tint.

How

How was it possible for them to remain insensible to the charms of so sublime a picture, which the light agitation of the leaves, and the mournful cries of the screech-owl, rendered still more solemn and affecting!

The young Amelina had often wished to ramble over the ruins of her paternal Castle, and, above all, to visit the chapel where reposed the ashes of her father and his ancestors, and she had often solicited her aunt to give her permission for that purpose; but notwithstanding the warmth and earnest repetition of her entreaties, donna Lucia had constantly and steadily refused them; and this obstinate denial of the first wish of her heart, and of the first request that had ever been refused her, was the more severely felt by Amelina, and her curiosity

sity the more excited on account of the obstacles that opposed the gratification of it.—“I cannot conceive,” said she, one day, “why my aunt so positively and constantly hinders me from visiting the old Castle. I only wish to prostrate myself upon the sepulchral marble that covers the remains of my father; and I am denied even that melancholy satisfaction.—Oh, my father!” continued she, throwing herself upon her knees, “if from thy celestial abode thou deignest to cast down thy looks upon thy child—if my filial piety can touch thy spirit, oh, grant that I may be allowed to carry to thy grave the tribute of my tears!—it is the liveliest, the most ardent of my vows!”

Alas! if it were permitted us to look
into

into futurity, what evils might we not avoid ! And even if this knowledge did not extend so far as to modify the events of life, we might at least derive from it the benefit of not forming the indiscreet wishes that so frequently prove the sources of unhappiness.

The mind and person of Amelina, now almost completely formed, announced that she had nearly attained the happy age, when nature excites in us those agitations and emotions until then un-felt, which precede the season of pleasure, or the undefinable sentiment that makes us thenceforward give additional value to our existence: a secret languor pervaded her whole frame—curiosity, restlessness, and a soft species of melancholy, by degrees took possession of

of her heart, and caused in her feelings a revolution equally singular and unexperienced.

Donna Lucia de Villa-Flora had never possessed, even in her most brilliant days, what may be called a face formed to inspire a decided passion. Her figure was much below the ordinary stature of her sex, and nature seemed to have designed all her features upon the same model. Although both her hair and eyes were particularly dark, her skin was of the most dazzling white; but the rose had never blended its lovely red with the modest whiteness of the lily, and her natural paleness had been increased by the weight of years and of misfortunes.

Upon considering with attention this interesting woman, no one could help feeling a sort of veneration at her appearance;

pearance; her pale inanimate complexion, her discoloured lips, her deadened eyes, her antiquated garments, and an air of affliction spread over her countenance, all contributed to give her the impressive and solemn aspect of an inhabitant of the tombs. But this appearance of singularity was quickly effaced by an acquaintance with the moral qualities which were so conspicuous in her, and of which sensibility and universal benevolence were the foundations: pious without affectation, virtuous without prudery, and beneficent without ostentation, donna Lucia might have served as a model to those who were anxious to follow the paths of virtue. Wholly resigned to the will of Heaven, no complaint was ever known to escape her—not a murmur ever passed her lips—ne-

ver

ver for a moment did she permit herself to arraign the decrees of Providence. She was naturally silent and uncommunicative, and having undergone a thousand hardships and afflictions, and survived almost every body that was dear to her, it was not surprising that her mind, wounded by misfortune, should have preserved the gloomy tint that appeared to have obscured it.

To a form the most graceful and airy, Amelina added a countenance and features of almost unrivalled harmony and beauty ; the smile of innocence played around her mouth, and her virgin forehead appeared to be the throne of candour. Her hair was of the fairest auburn, and its elegant tresses hung in profusion about her shoulders ; her large blue eyes and finely-pencilled eyebrows seemed

seemed to command universal homage, and her mouth was distinguished by diminutive and rosy lips, which, on opening, discovered most beautiful rows of teeth, or gave passage to a voice whose accents penetrated to the very soul.

Donna Lucia had not failed to remark the alteration that had taken place in her niece, and readily conjectured the cause of it: judging, therefore, that her education might be considered as nearly finished, she resolved upon accomplishing the plans she had long since formed; but whilst, without Ameline's knowledge, she was preparing every thing for their success, Heaven, which had otherwise ordained, permitted not the execution of her projects.

During the early part of the summer, that succeeded donna Lucia's remarks,

and determinations, she usually accompanied her niece after supper upon the terrace, where they enjoyed the cool and refreshing breezes of the evening, and conversed upon different subjects until their customary hour of repose. After having discoursed one evening during a few minutes, a silence ensued, and each delivered herself up to the charms of that state of pensive thought which the stillness of the night seemed peculiarly to invite. The air was calm, the most profound darkness reigned around them, and all nature seemed wrapped in awful and impressive silence, when suddenly the mournful tolling of a bell, as if for one departed, was thrice heard in the air, and thrice re-echoed by the neighbouring woods and valleys.

Alarmed at the strange and melan-

choly sound, Amelina screamed aloud, and donna Lucia, seizing the hand of her niece, and shivering with affright, immediately fainted in her arms.

The outeries of their young lady quickly brought the servants to the spot with flambeaux, and their care and the caresses of her niece speedily restored donna Lucia to her senses; but, harassed, pale, and feeble, she continued to fix her terrified eyes upon the ground. Amelina contemplated her with sorrow, mingled with astonishment; Marcelosa incessantly crossed herself, and Gerando attentively considered this dumb and affliction scene, to which the lateness of the hour, the place, and the obscurity faintly dissipated by the torches, gave a character still more formidable and melancholy.

“Gerardo,”

"Gerardo," said donna Lucia, when her agitated feelings allowed her to utter a few words—"Gerardo, didst thou hear that extraordinary bell?—Knowest thou from whence it could proceed?"

"Segnora, the sound you mention I most assuredly heard, but I know not whence it came."

"Oh!" said Marcelosa, "it is doubtless a poor soul in agony that entreats our prayers."

"My dearest Amelina," said donna Lucia, expressively shrugging up her shoulders, "either our imagination has deceived us, or the sound of the bell proceeds from the convent of Santa Maria; and this conjecture seems the more probable from the distance being so small, and Gerardo having likewise heard it."

"Segnora," replied Gerardo, "I am

too well acquainted with the sound of the convent-bells, not to be sure that the tolling which has alarmed you did not proceed from such a distance."

"The fact however is, that we all heard the bell," said Amelina; "it is not imaginary, and certainly I will leave nothing undone to unveil this mysterious adventure."

"Ah, my young lady!" resumed the old man, "I cannot tell what you will do to succeed in your wish; but the proverb says, that we must not always thrust the hand between the tree and the bark."

"Nobody believes me," said Marcellosa, "but I would lay any thing that all this is the work of a ghost. Alas! who knows but it may be the spirit of my late lord, the marquis, (God rest his soul!)

soul!) that has thought proper to toll the bell? The poor dear man! he was so good, and so affable!—notwithstanding all that, when folks die without having had time to confess, and when they are interred without ceremony like a heretic, it is not astonishing that they should return and require the prayers that had been refused them.—Now, signora, one thing persuades me that I mistake not in my conjectures, for it was undoubtedly the chapel-bell that tolled just now—it was in that very chapel that the remains of the marquis were deposited, and—”

Marcelosa was here interrupted by the renewed tolling of the bell, which was thrice repeated.—“Great God!” she exclaimed, “was I wrong in my conjectures?”

Indeed no one now doubted of the sound proceeding from the chapel-bell, and a dead silence ensued for some moments, which was at length broken by Gerardo.—“Marcelosa has certainly guessed right,” he said; “I myself suspected the truth, but dared not say so, for fear of increasing the alarm of the *segnora*.”

“What!” exclaimed Amelina; “are you simple enough to believe all the absurd tales of Marcelosa?”

“Perhaps they are not so absurd as you imagine, *segnora*; God has frequently permitted such things to come to pass—ay, and even things still more incomprehensible.”

Notwithstanding her inclination for the marvellous, and the pleasure she took in reading stories about ghosts,

Amelina

Amelina believed not in spectres, and far from being affrighted by the sound of the chapel-bell, the mysterious observations of the servants, and the evident terror of her aunt, she would willingly have visited every corner of the chapel without delay, if old Gerardo would have accompanied her.

Donna Lucia remained for some time in a state of stupefaction; the wildness of her eyes denoted the disorder of her soul, and she seemed not to hear the conversation of those around her. Her niece, alarmed at the long continuance of this state of insensibility, attempted to rouse her by her discourse.—“ My dear aunt,” said she, “ for God’s sake do not give yourself up to such painful and melancholy thoughts, but endeavour to recall your fortitude; why should an in-

cident of such little consequence distress you? I allow that it appears extremely uncommon; but it surely has a cause, and that cause seems to me neither difficult nor impossible to discover. Tomorrow morning we will make an exact search about the chapel and the Castle: prudence even dictates this measure, for how do we know whether we are alone in the precincts of the Castle, or whether a gang of robbers, seduced by the air of mystery, and the hopes of plundering us with impunity, may not have introduced themselves amongst the ruins?"

"There is nothing to fear on that score," interrupted Gerardo. "Robbers are seldom heard of in all Beira; and besides, how and where could they find their way into the Castle, considering the height and thickness of the walls?

—For

—For my part, signora, my opinion is, that the sound we have heard was occasioned by the falling in of some stones upon the bell—and that I take to be the whole mystery.”

“ I think with you,” resumed Amelina, “ that the circumstance may have happened as you say—But no matter; it is necessary to make researches, which, even if they are fruitless, cannot possibly be prejudicial. So to-morrow morning——”

At this instant donna Lucia, suddenly starting from the state of absorption in which she had been plunged, cried out, with a voice and gesture of affright—
“ To-morrow morning!—To-morrow!
Oh no! no! no!—not to-morrow!”

“ But, my dear aunt, why refuse your Amelina so trifling a request?—why

so seriously deny me the satisfaction of visiting the chapel to-morrow?"

"Heavens! to-morrow!—Impossible!"

"The signora is quite right," said the old cook; "your researches would be vain—you would find nothing, perhaps, but great ugly phantoms, that would frighten you to death. Prayers, prayers! that's the measure to be adopted—they are the only means of appeasing the souls in purgatory! Ah, my dear young mistress! take care not to disturb the dead—beware how you draw their vengeance down upon you!—if you did but know how terrible it is, you would not think of exposing yourself to its effects—the Castle would probably become uninhabitable. But that you may not fancy that I speak without experience, I will tell you what I have seen with mine

mine own eyes, and you shall hear what strange and extraordinary things have come to pass——”

“ Hold thy peace!” cried donna Lucia, casting an authoritative look upon Marcelosa—“ hold thy peace, or fear to draw down upon thee all my indignation!”

Poor Marcelosa cast her eyes upon the ground without venturing to answer a single word, so much was she terrified by the menacing voice and countenance of the signora.

“ It is past eleven,” said donna Lucia, rising; “ it is time for us to separate. Go, my dear Amelina—go and compose yourself to sleep, and may Heaven grant you its benediction!”

She then tenderly embraced her niece; and having ordered Marcelosa to follow

her, she returned to her pavilion, preceded by Gerardo with a light.

Marcelosa, who lingered behind, now whispered to Amelina, that notwithstanding the orders of donna Lucia, she would take an opportunity of telling her every thing that had passed, for that it was of great consequence that she should know it; and giving Amelina a light, the old cook hobbled after donna Lucia as fast as her infirmities would permit.

CHAPTER II.

SEVERAL minutes elapsed before Amelina, amazed and confounded at the conduct of her aunt; and at the mysterious language of Marcelosa, thought of retiring to her apartment ; but finding herself quite alone, she with difficulty shook off a momentary alarm, and precipitately entering her pavilion, went directly into the library, intending to procure an amusing book, that might divert her thoughts from the melancholy train into which the late incidents and conversation seemed to lead them.

She

She had cast her eyes over the shelves without finding any thing to her mind, when they accidentally fixed upon one that she had never before noticed, though so remarkable for its bulk and decorations; it was a ponderous folio, covered with crimson velvet, and ornamented with clasps and corners of silver gilt. Upon opening it she found that it contained a large collection of ancient legends and romances, beautifully written upon vellum, elegantly illuminated, and adorned with coloured drawings, representing the most interesting scenes in the several stories it related. Enchanted at possessing a book so admirably suited to her inclinations, Amelina hastened with it to her chamber, where, upon shutting her windows, she heard such a loud talking in her aunt's pavilion as induced

duced her to life,
being unable to
but the confusion
completed before
the night, and
following tale is
usual :—

F

An Anecdote.

BORN of parents
lost in the obscure
orphan almost
inhabited the
Her immense
support with d
rank and the a
eclipsed by b
knights and l
castle, open to

tion, was the seat of pleasure and amusement ; the noble families in the neighbourhood paid their court to her with assiduity, and a great number of pages and attendants of every description rivalled each other in their endeavours to anticipate her most trifling desires.

If the possession of wealth, the display of grandeur, and the charms of beauty and of youth, can procure or contribute to true happiness, who could pretend to it with more reason than Fredegilda ? And yet, with all those advantages, and in the midst of the entertainments, banquets, and carousals, at which the youth of noble blood, incessantly occupied in attempts to please her, employed every artifice in the hope of attracting her attention and favour, self-weariness and ennui pursued her without ceasing.

The

The most illustrious paladins of the duchy in vain solicited her hand: she steadily refused them all, and solemnly announced her intentions of never submitting to the yoke of Hymen—a declaration, however, which, far from discouraging her numerous suitors, only rendered them more importunate and ardent in their pursuit. Irritated at the continuance of their pretensions, Fredegilda assembled all her admirers at the castle, reproached them with aspiring to her hand, notwithstanding her declared resolution, and finished by enjoining them never more to appear within her domain.—“But be assured,” added she, in dismissing them, “that since I have not chosen a husband from amongst you, my firm intention is never to be married: I call God to witness this vow; and

and may he punish me if I dare violate it!"

Affecting to be satisfied with the assurance she had given them, her suitors reluctantly took leave of Fredegilda, whom they could not help looking upon with admiration, although the singularity of her conduct had defeated their wishes and ambition.

Fredegilda in truth detested a sex whose whole happiness consisted in the most diversified endeavours to please her. She had as it were imbibed this aversion with the milk of her nurse Heraldina, who, by incessant declamations against the perfidy of men, had succeeded in planting in the heart of Fredegilda the hatred she was so anxious to inspire; and as the nurse's advice entirely governed her actions as she grew older, it was

at

at her instigation that she made and published the resolution at once so surprising and discouraging to her admirers.

But notwithstanding her contempt for men, Fredegilda's self-love was considerably flattered by the homage she had received; and when her anger was appeased, and her castle was deserted, she began to repent having acted so precipitately. She quickly felt all the horrors of the solitude to which she had so hastily condemned herself; and melancholy taking possession of her mind augmented her disgust, and almost crushed her with the weight of her own existence. At length, being no longer able to resist the chagrin that overwhelmed her, Fredegilda opened her heart to Hepaldina, and assured her that she must finally yield to her sufferings, unless she could find a me-

thod

thod which, without committing her, might bring back to her feet those whom an inconsiderate vehemence had driven from her—" Not that I by any means intend to break the promise which I have so solemnly pronounced, and which is and ought to be irrevocable: besides, if I had the weakness to allow myself to be softened in favour of any man, the shame, infamy, and dishonour, that would result from it, would always prevent me from making such an avowal. If, therefore, my dear Heraldina, I wish for the return of my admirers, it is less for the purpose of enjoying the sight of them, than with a view of giving myself up to the continued tumult and diversions that necessarily follow their arrival."

" You are quite right, my dear lady," replied Heraldina, " and it is perfectly easy

easy for you to gratify yourself without casting the least blemish upon your glory and reputation. You are on the eve of attaining your twenty-fifth year; under pretence of celebrating the anniversary of your birth, you may with propriety give directions for a tournament, and I will answer for it, that at that signal of glory, you will immediately be surrounded by all those who have been unable to withstand the power of your charms."

Fredegilda, highly approving the proposal, caused it to be made known throughout Moravia and the adjoining states; and the intelligence was no sooner dispersed abroad than the suitors returned in crowds to the castle, more enslaved than ever by her charms, and thinking themselves but too happy in the opportunity

tunity of again seeing the object of their wishes, and of signalizing their courage and dexterity in her presence.

A great number of nobles of both sexes, from the neighbouring districts, appeared upon the first day of the tournament: the courteous manners of these strangers, their dignified air, their elegant dress, and the magnificence of their equipages, essentially contributed to the splendour of the festival, and it was universally allowed that this was the most brilliant carousal that had ever been exhibited in Moravia. During six days the advantage between the disputants was nearly equal; but upon the seventh, sir Adolphus so eminently distinguished himself, that the judges of the contest unanimously decreed him worthy of the crown and recompence destined for the conqueror.

conqueror. The ceremony of his triumph was as usual postponed to the next day; and when the herald-at-arms had thrice proclaimed the name of Adolphus, the knights conducted the ladies into a ball-room, sumptuously decorated, where Adolphus, taking the hand of Fredegilda, began the ball, and was followed by the other paladins and their partners.

Whilst Fredegilda was complacently examining the crowd that surrounded the dancers, she particularly remarked a knight who appeared to conceal himself from notice. His armour was completely black, without either devise or ornament whatever; but Fredegilda observed with astonishment that the visor and upper part of his helmet were lowered. He had not assisted at the tournament—

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he had not been presented to the lady of the Castle; no one seemed to be acquainted with, or to acknowledge him, and Fredegilda saw no other method of gratifying her curiosity than that of sending to entreat the stranger to favour her with his name.—“My name,” he replied to the page who demanded it, “shall not long be kept a secret. Assure your lady of my profound respect: to-morrow her curiosity shall be satisfied.”

Whilst the page related this answer, the stranger withdrew from the crowd and disappeared: but his mysterious words singularly embarrassed the heroine of the festival, who framed a thousand conjectures, without knowing what opinion to form. She soon became thoughtful and perplexed, and her mind being greatly agitated, she, under pretence of indisposition,

indisposition, retired to her apartment, and excused herself from appearing at the banquet that succeeded the ball.

Fredegilda's impatience for the arrival of the morrow allowed her scarcely any repose; the stranger was present to her imagination throughout the night, and it was with infinite satisfaction that she observed the day dawning through the windows of her chamber.

As the ceremony of crowning the conqueror Adolphus was to take place in the course of the morning, Fredegilda endeavoured to heighten her charms by the brilliant advantages of dress. Her robe was of violet-coloured velvet, trimmed with ermine, and glittering with gold; a mantle of blue velvet, embroidered with silver, and fastened by two diamond clasps, flowed gracefully from

her shoulders, and formed a long train upon the ground; a purple veil, elegantly interwoven with her jet black hair, floated round her head, whilst bracelets, earrings, and an aigrette of the most precious stones, added not only to her incomparable beauty, but to the uncommon splendour of her garments.

The warlike sound of trumpets having given the signal for the commencement of the ceremony, the company repaired to the state apartment of Fredegilda, and the triumphal march immediately began. Four knights, preceded by a herald-at-arms, first advanced, and were followed by a nobleman who bore the standard of the house of Fredegilda. A second herald marched before the heroine of the castle, surrounded by a great number of ladies, whose charms were eclipsed by hers,

herz, as the stars of the evening are obscured when the radiant light of the moon appears upon the verge of the horizon. Four pages gracefully supported the train of her mantle, and a third herald advanced before a cluster of knights, in the midst of whom was sir Adolphus, distinguished by the splendour of his armour. The judges of the contest followed the knightly group, and the march was closed by a crowd of pages and retainers.

The procession filed off to the sound of martial music, and being arrived in the great court of the castle, Fredegilda seated herself upon a throne under a rich canopy, holding in one hand a crown of ivy, and in the other a dagger richly set with diamonds, the intended reward of the valour of Adolphus.

Every one being placed in order, the conqueror modestly advanced towards the throne, and knelt upon the steps, whilst Fredegilda prepared to place the crown of ivy upon his head ; but suddenly a loud voice exclaimed—"Stay ! stay !" and at the same time an unknown knight, precipitating himself at the feet of Fredegilda, requested that the ceremony might be delayed.

Fredegilda instantly recognized the knight who the preceding evening had excited her curiosity and occasioned her agitation.

"Sir Adolphus," said the stranger arrogantly, "dost thou know me?"

Adolphus answering, in a tone equally haughty, that he did not recollect ever to have seen him, the other continued his discourse—"Thou hast fought and conquered

conquered all the knights who surround thee, but think not that on that account the reward belongs alone to thee. Examine me : speak ! have I been overcome by thee?"

Adolphus making a sign in the negative, the stranger knight drew off one of his gloves, and throwing it in the midst of the spectators—"Let Adolphus and six of the boldest paladins take up that pledge: I challenge them to the combat. Let them enter the lists with me; I am ready to encounter them."

The knights instantly rushed forward to pick up the gauntlet of defiance, and after having requested Fredegilda's permission to engage with the arrogant stranger who provoked them, they drew lots amongst them to determine upon

those who should be entitled to that privilege.

The decision being made, the judges of the combat thrice called on the champions who were to measure their strength with the unknown warrior, and a herald gave the signal as soon as they were assembled. One of the six champions immediately advanced towards the aggressor, but his efforts were unsuccessful: in a moment he was disabled from continuing; and the rest, who successively presented themselves, were all defeated with the same facility.

Sir Adolphus now remained to terminate the contest, and all eyes, fixed upon the two antagonists who were so worthy of each other, appeared impatiently to await the issue of the engagement. It is impossible to describe the prodigies

prodigies of valour and address that were displayed on both sides—the efforts were equally active, obstinate, and long-continued; but Adolphus was at last discomfited, and constrained to pronounce himself subdued.

After gaining a victory so brilliant, the stranger took off his helmet, and discovered to the admiring spectators a countenance full of youth, dignity, and grace. A thousand plaudits and acclamations resounded through the air, whilst he prostrated himself at the feet of Fredegilda, who raising him up, placed the crown upon his brow, presented him with the dagger, and, according to the usual forms, extended her hand for him to kiss.

When this ceremony was completed, the young knight bowed respectfully,

and thus addressed himself to Fredegilda—"I may now, madam, make known to you my name and birth, for the glory that surrounds me emboldens me to avow that I am Arnold, only son of the duke of Bohemia."—At this declaration a deep silence reigned around, and Fredegilda gracefully inclined her head.—“Fame long since conveyed to my ears, madam, the brilliancy of your charms, as well as your extraordinary resolution never to dispose of your fair hand. From that moment I anxiously desired to see and to be acquainted with you, and I even ventured to hope that I might be fortunate enough to occasion a revolution in your sentiments. I was considering how it might be possible to be introduced to you, when the tidings of your intended tournament smoothed every difficult-

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ty. But though I used the utmost diligence, it was impossible for me to arrive here before the commencement of the festival. I therefore concealed myself from observation, and under favour of an unsuspected disguise, I imbibed from your bright eyes the love with which I feel myself inflamed. As a person of my rank could not better announce himself to you than by an action of distinction and eclat, I summoned your knights to the contest. Fortune, or rather love, favoured my enterprises, and Arnold at length ventures to introduce himself. Listen to me, madam, I beseech you, and deign to give your whole attention to all that I have further to communicate. I love you—I adore you, and in the presence of this dignified assembly I presume to make the avowal of my passion.

sion.—Noble ladies, and you, illustrious paladins, I here entreat the adorable Fredegilda either to grant me her hand in wedlock, or, if I have not the happiness to please her, to prove it to me by giving the preference to a rival. I call upon you to witness the purity of my intentions, and I summon you to meet me here in eight days.—I hope, madam, that at the end of that term you will publicly declare to me your resolution. I leave you sufficient time for reflection, and I conjure you to remember that my fate is in your hands."

Having thus spoken, Arnold hastened out of the castle, and left the whole assembly, and especially Fredegilda, in amazement at his extravagant conduct and declarations.

When Fredegilda was alone, she repassed

passed in her mind every thing that had just happened, as if to convince herself of the reality of the facts. The singular behaviour of Arnold had sensibly affected her, but it was precisely through the medium of that singularity that love had found its way to her heart; and when she figured to herself the noble air and countenance of her admirer, the charms of his person, his distinguished bravery, and the splendour of his rank, she could not prevent herself from feeling for him a sentiment whose warmth soon informed her that her heart no longer was her own. But what unavoidable regrets succeeded this discovery! She adored Arnold—and an indiscreet oath obliged her to renounce him: then it was that Ermegilda felt all the consequences of her imprudence.

[Here Amelina interrupted her perusal in order to trim her light, which was on the point of being extinguished; she then opened her window, to discover whether the conversation had ceased in her aunt's pavilion, and finding all was quiet, resumed her occupation.]

The eight days were nearly elapsed—the fatal moment drew nigh, and Fredegilda, the situation of whose mind cannot be described, was yet undecided what steps she ought to take. If she had listened only to the impulse of her heart, Arnold's wishes would have been gratified; but the imperious voice of self-love, and, above all, the reproaches of Heraldina, occasioned in her the bitterest and most melancholy reflections.

“What, madam,” said that artful woman, “can you consent to become the laughing-

laughing-stock of the whole country, by marrying the son of the duke of Bohemia ? Can you so hastily and at once belie your resolutions, and in spite of all my salutary lessons, thus subvert and destroy the principles that you had so solemnly established ? No ! I never will believe that your judgment can be so strangely perverted. Once more have recourse to reason, madam, and deliver not yourself up to a fantastical illusion. Remember also, that before you can become the spouse of Arnold, he must annihilate by his valour all the lovers whom you have refused. As for me, my voice is only that of amicable remonstrance : if my tenderness and friendship (expressions which I am sure you will forgive me, from your knowledge of my sincerity) have no effect upon your mind,

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62. CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

you will surely pay some attention to the earnest representations of a woman who could not, without deadly grief, be witness of the degradation into which the sex would unquestionably be plunged by such mutability."

The crafty Heraldina, mingling tears with her discourse, at length prevailed upon Frdegilda positively to reject the offers of the young and valiant prince of Bohemia.—“I but too well feel,” she said, “the whole force of your arguments. Ah! why did I make so senseless, so precipitate a promise? . . But for that, or rather for the fear of occasioning a thousand quarrels, to which Arnold would be constantly exposed, I should not have hesitated to have received him as my husband.—I should have joyfully sacrificed to him my fatal pride. Oh! how

how delightful would it have been for me to have proved to him my love! But, Heavens! when I think that his death might perhaps be the result of our marriage, I tremble, I shudder with affright; I must therefore think of him no more—I must forget that I might have been the happy consort of the most amiable of mortals. Dearest Heraldina, I feel that I shall not long survive this cruel disappointment: he will, however, live—I shall at least have preserved his days, and that consolatory idea will make me peacefully descend into the tomb."

After strengthening herself in her resolution, Fredegilda awaited the eighth day with ominous impatience, and upon its arrival took her place in the castle-yard, in the midst of the witnesses who had

had been summoned to attend. Pale, harassed, and worn out, Fredegilda in vain endeavoured to calm the trouble of her mind—a dreadful foreboding agitated her soul, and her constrained and uneasy mien betrayed the emotions of her heart.

A profound silence prevailed in the assembly, when Arnold entered the castle, followed by a numerous and splendid retinue. Over his brilliant armour shone a richly-embroidered sash, in which he bore the dagger he had received from Fredegilda, and a plume of feathers, as white as snow, majestically nodded over his helmet. His noble and easy carriage gave him an air of grandeur that excited universal admiration and respect, and having gallantly saluted the whole company,

pany, he prostrated himself before Fredegilda, and besought her to declare her determination.

"My lord Arnold," said Fredegilda, with a trembling voice, and fixing her eyes upon the ground, "I have refused my hand to all those who have done me the honour of soliciting it, and I have signified to those valorous knights my irrevocable intention of never becoming the wife of any man. Judge then if I can with propriety so grievously affront them as to accept the offer you have made me? Doubtless I feel both highly honoured and flattered by the proposed mark of your affection, but the obstacle that opposes my acceptance of it is, I assure you, insurmountable. Be therefore generous enough no longer to talk to me of your passion, since

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CASQUE OF VILLE-ELORA.

it is utterly impossible for me to requite it. At the same time, I most seriously declare, in the presence of this illustrious company, that I prefer no person in the world to yourself; and, I here renew the oath that I have taken to continue entirely my own mistress. Let me entreat you, therefore, my lord," continued she, with a faltering voice, "to devote your heart to some object more deserving of it. It is my most anxious prayer that you may be happy—it is the earnest wish and sole desire of my heart."

Having terminated her address, she turned aside her head, in order to hide the tears that flowed plentifully from her eyes.

Arnold had alternately grown pale and red during her discourse. At the close of it, indignation and madness were strongly

strongly pointed upon his countenance, and his face was convulsed in a manner the most frightful and alarming....“Master of abomination!” exclaimed he, in accents of rage....“fierce tiger! thy soul is more hideous than sin itself!—There is no expression by which I can describe the horror with which thou hast inspired me. Thou hast pronounced the sentence of my death, and thou shalt be instantly freed from my odious presence. Execable woman! come, come, and bathe thyself in my blood!”

Having uttered these dreadful words, furious and enraged, he drew the poniard from his scabbard, plunged it with vehemence into his breast, and instantly fell back upon the ground. At this terrifying spectacle, Fredegilda precipitated herself

self upon the body of her lover, and pressing him in her arms, loaded him with the tenderest caresses. She conjured him to live for her sake ; she talked to him of her love with earnestness and passion, and appeared to disregard the spectators, who attempted to tear her from the expiring knight. Death, in the mean while, hovered over that unfortunate but frantic youth : the lustre of his eyes was already deadened—his cheeks were cold and livid, and the termination of his existence approached, when, for the last time, opening his mouth, he uttered these melancholy words—“ It is too late, Fredegilda—alas ! it is too late !—I die, for thou wouldest have it so ! Vain and useless tenderness, as false as is thy heart ! But remember, that

that one day Heaven will avenge me, and thou shalt be punished ! I therefore bid you not adieu—I die !—I die !”

The unhappy and terrified Fredegilda heard only the first part of these exclamations, for she fainted and fell upon the corpse, and was carried to her apartment, whilst every effort was made to recall her admirer to life : but all exertions being fruitless, he was interred with due honours in the family vault of Fredegilda, and was attended to the grave by the knights in funeral procession.

The assistance afforded by Heraldina to her lady after some time restored her to her senses : but when, upon opening her eyes, she perceived the confident whose perfidious counsels had caused her misfortunes—“ Fly !” she exclaimed, whilst she averted her eyes with horror

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from her nurse—"fly, infamous wretch!" and beware of again appearing before me!—Oh, my Arnold!" she continued, "I adored thee, and have caused thy death! Thou desiredst my happiness, and—oh God! am I miserable enough. In his last moments he loaded me with imprecations; I shall die, therefore, under the tremendous burthen of his curse! Yes, Arnold, I will die!—I hear thy voice that summons me to the tomb! Wait! wait!—I come, I fly to thee!"

She then endeavoured to seize a destructive weapon, but her arms were forcibly held by her women, who, by dint of unwearied attentions, succeeded in saving her from the consequences of despair. But from that hour joy and pleasure for ever fled the precincts of the castle. Dwelling entirely upon her affliction,

iction, nourishing her sorrow by solitude, and concentrating all her woes in one single object, the deplorable Fredegilda passed her days and nights in ceaseless tears and lamentations. Like the lamp that glimmers around the tomb, she gradually wasted away, and drew nigh to extinction: her fatal beauty was no longer but a shadow; her soul appeared ready to take its flight at every sigh she uttered, and she seemed rather to belong to death, than to have any connection with existence.

'A whole year passed thus sorrowfully, until the anniversary of Arnold's death, when Fredegilda repaired in the morning to the tomb that inclosed his mortal remains, and thiere continued until the evening, incessantly praying for the repose of his soul. When she returned to

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her apartment, she ordered her attendants to remain with her, and they endeavoured to amuse her mind by recounting stories of past times: but, wrapped in contemplation, and inattentive to their tales, she preserved the most profound silence, until the sound of the midnight hour seemed to penetrate her with affright—she breathed with difficulty, and an universal tremor took possession of her. On a sudden an alarming noise, that was heard in the vestibule, grew every instant more terrifying, and presently became so violent, that the attendants rose up to seek their safety in flight.

[At this part of the book Amelina thought she heard a stifled sort of sound at no great distance. She listened attentively, without daring to turn her head;

head; but hearing nothing more, she supposed it to have proceeded from the starting of a boar. At that moment the library clock struck twelve, and this conformity with the story of Fredegilda rather alarmed Amelina, who, however, continued the perusal of the manuscript.]

The door of the vestibule being opened with vehemence, a dreadful phantom entered the room, dragging its chains after it, and uttering the most hideous screams. It wore the accoutrements of a warrior; its weapons were stained with blood, and the shroud that half covered it seemed to have been dipped in gore. At this dreadful spectacle Fredegilda attempted to fly; but the spectre, seizing her long garments, forcibly retained her, and in a sepulchral voice exclaimed —“I am Arnold!—I am the lover whose

death was occasioned by thy rigour ! Call to mind the last words that I uttered—remember that I called on Heaven to avenge my sufferings: my prayers have been listened to, and I am ordered to execute its decrees!" Then, clasping Fredegilda in its arms, it conveyed her away, mingling its howlings with the clamours of the victim, and suddenly disappeared with its prey.

The castle of Fredegilda has been deserted since that melancholy event; but the inhabitants of the neighbourhood have frequently heard in it the sound of groans and lamentations, and oftentimes, by the pale light of the moon, they have observed spectres wandering over the ruins of the edifice.

going to faint! How sorry I am to be the cause of all this?"

"Don't make yourself uneasy, my good Marcelosa, it is nothing at all.... Thank Heaven! my fears are all at an end; and I am the more convinced how little faith we ought to place in stories about ghosts and apparitions. But tell me, Marcelosa, why you came so late into my apartment?"

"You shall know directly: your aunt is gone to sleep, and now I can tell you every thing. Alas, my child! I plainly see that you are in danger; I cannot therefore be silent. It is for your sake that I venture to disobey your aunt, to whom you must not betray me, for she has just repeated her commands with threats."

" You alarm me beyond measure,
Marcelosa: what is it then that——"

" To enable you to comprehend the whole, I should be under the necessity of relating every thing that I know about your parents, which I confess would occasion me more bitterness of thought than I have strength to bear.— My lord, your father, and his dear lady, were excellent masters to me; and when they saw me, always spoke kindly to me, and called me good Marcelosa—Ah! it makes me weep only to think of it—"

" For Heaven's sake, don't cry so, Marcelosa!" said Amelina, " but begin just wherever you please, and don't keep me any longer in painful expectation."

" Santa Maria! that is not so easy as you think; and then I must be quite
without

without a heart were I to forget all the kindnesses of——But come, come—don't be impatient, and I'll tell you.—About six months after the death of the marquis Leontio, I remember as well as if it had been yesterday, that one fine morning—No—stop—it was one night, we heard a dreadful noise throughout the Castle, which was not at that time shut up, though we had ceased to inhabit it. Donna Lucia, Gerardo, and I, being awakened by the noise, arose and saw a vast number of lights, that seemed to be moving about the deserted apartments in the Castle; and we at the same time heard the most lamentable shrieks proceeding from the chapel. All this uproar made us shudder with terror and apprehension, and you will easily imagine that neither of us was tempted to

examine whether the noise was occasioned by spirits or any other cause; but the tumult having ceased at daybreak, we went into the chapel, and visited the whole Castle, without the satisfaction of finding any traces of what had passed. Every thing was as we had left it—there did not appear even the slightest alteration; and all this gave me reason to suppose that it was the soul of my lord the Marquis——”

“ Hush!” said Amelina, interrupting the old woman; “ methinks I hear a noise.”

Marcelosa listened, but hearing nothing she went on—“ The same uproar took place the following night, and was repeated during several succeeding ones; and donna Lucia, finding that all her researches and endeavours to find out the

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the causes were ineffectual, ordered the inner courts to be shut up; since which, nothing has been ever seen or heard there until this night, that the tolling of the chapel-bell so astonished and disconcerted us. I never before mentioned these incidents to you, because your aunt desired that you might remain ignorant of them, lest they should too sensibly affect you; but now that these prodigies seem to be upon the point of being renewed, I thought it my duty to reveal to you what I conclude to be the occasion of them. I have now, signora, some advice to give you; and if you have any regard for, or confidence in me, you will not hesitate to follow it. You must endeavour to persuade donna Luisa speedily to quit the Castle of Villa-

Flora ; and if she will not agree to do so, you must insist upon no longer sleeping in this pavilion."

" Why not ? Is this room less safe than any other ? "

" I don't say that," answered Marcelosa, with visible embarrassment ; " nevertheless, follow my advice if you continue in the Castle."

" But how can I propose to my aunt to change her residence, without having a single reason to give her for my doing so ? You see, Marcelosa, that it would be very indiscreet to make such a request."

" Know then, signora, that your apartment is separated from the chapel only by that wall ; that the tomb of your deceased father is placed against that very wall ; and that, if the noises recommence, you

you may not only be the witness, but the victim of them."

Marcelosa had no sooner finished this terrifying caution, than, without waiting for an answer, she bounced out of the room, and left Amelina in the midst of the astonishment that the old woman's narrative had naturally excited. The neighbourhood of her father's tomb was in nowise capable of inspiring her with apprehension; and as she did not put implicit confidence in the disjointed and improbable stories of Marcelosa, she fell asleep without thinking further upon the subject. In the course of the night, however, she had a dream, or rather a vision, which, when she awoke in the morning, seemed to have made a lively impression upon her imagination. It appeared to her, that soon after she had

fallen asleep, a light had suddenly struck upon her eyelids; that, dazzled by its brilliancy, she had at first been unable to distinguish any object, but that as soon as she had recovered her sight, she had perceived at the end of her apartment two women, with veils over their faces, whose black garments tramped upon the ground; she thought that one of these women carried a lantern, by whose light she had distinguished them, but that, whilst she was contemplating these extraordinary figures, they disappeared, and vanished like the flying smoke.

When the daughter of Leontje had reconsidered these details, she was greatly perplexed to ascertain whether they had been the effect of a dream, or whether the circumstances had in reality taken place; and under this uncertainty she

she resolved to say nothing of it to her aunt, lest she should suspect the indiscreet Marcelosa of having revealed to her the real or pretended apparitions that had formerly so disturbed them.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun had but just appeared above the horizon, when donna Lucia entered the apartment of her niece, and without referring to the events of the preceding evening, proposed a walk, to which the serenity of the weather and the freshness of the morning seemed particularly to invite them. After passing along the avenue of chesnuts, they reached a valley, watered by a limpid rivulet, whose sinuous banks, shaded by a variety of tufted trees, invited them to follow it. The verdant grass still glistened

tened with the dewdrops; the feathered songsters saluted the return of day with their inimitable harmony; and nature, ornamented with fresh charms, seemed to exhale the most fragrant and salutary odours. A delicious sensation penetrated the heart of Amelina, and donna Lucia, notwithstanding the affliction so forcibly painted by her soul upon her countenance, could not help admiring the interesting scene that lay before her; and whilst they slowly ascended the hill that fronted the Castle of Villa-Flora, they frequently stopped to enjoy the enchanting prospect that unfolded itself. Seated at the foot of a rock, from which fell, in broken cataracts, the rivulet that serpentined through the valley, donna Lucia and her niece were never tired of contemplating the beauty of the surrounding

surrounding landscape. The antique Castle and gloomy forest majestically arose together, and formed a group of equal beauty and magnificence. The convent of Santa Maria was distinguished by its spiral and lofty tower, rising from the bosom of a grove; and light columns of smoke, either agitated by the wind, or rising perpendicularly in the air, served to point out the situation of the hamlets dispersed amidst the olive-trees and vineyards, that covered the declivities towards the south. The picture was terminated by the ocean, whose waves seemed blended with the azure canopy of heaven, and upon whose vast surface were seen a variety of vessels, and innumerable white sails, that formed a striking contrast with the blueish colour of the water,

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The banks of the rivulet, near which the wanderers reposed, were thickly set with poplars, cypresses, and sycamores; festoons of ivy and periwinkle were gracefully pendent along the mossy sides of the rock; and thick tufts of myrtle, orange, and pomegranate-trees deep-rooted this charming spot, and perfumed the air with the fragrant exhalations from their innumerable flowers.

After silently and for some time considering the unrivalled beauties that encompassed her, donna Lucia, deeply sighing and wiping away the falling tear, exclaimed—"Oh, my Amelina! the moment is arrived for me to reveal to you the important events with which it is requisite for you to be acquainted. Hitherto I have deemed it useless to talk to you about the unfortunate persons

sons to whom you are indebted for existence; but circumstances now make it necessary for me to do so, and I will communicate to you every thing that I know concerning them: you will at once learn the magnitude of your loss, and the projects that I have formed for your future happiness. I feel indeed that I am about to reopen every wound in my heart, by retracing incidents, the recollection of which was gradually softened by the lapse of time; but I will fulfil the painful and important task—I no longer hesitate, when I think that your future happiness may depend upon the sacrifice. It was in this very spot, my dearest Amelina, that your tender and lamented father had a sort of foreboding in his mind, that seemed to announce the future misfortunes of his life.

Alas!

Alas! many are the years that have elapsed since that melancholy day! The water has not ceased to precipitate itself in torrents—the rock has not ceased to keep its station, and yet my unhappy brother——”

Sobs and tears prevented donna Lucia from continuing; and Amelina, clasping her in her arms, pressed her against her heart, and at length, by multiplied caresses, succeeded in restoring her, and calming the affliction that had overwhelmed her.

“ My aunt! my dearest aunt! let me entreat you to compose yourself. Do not drive me to despair. If the account you wish to give me is indeed to occasion you such sorrow, and to renew such heartrending recollections, whatever interest I may have in it, I renounce the

hearing

hearing it—I had rather remain ignorant of it for ever!"

" My child, how endearing to me is your tenderness!—how precious are the proofs of affection I receive from you! If my love for you were capable of an increase, these testimonies of your attachment and sensibility would doubtless merit it; but when, wholly occupied with your happiness, I live entirely for you, do you think, my Amelina, that it is possible for me to cherish you still more? For you I arm myself with courage—for you I can expose myself to every danger. Upon your cradle I swore to consecrate my existence to you; Heaven heard the oath, and will, I trust, prolong my life until it can be no longer serviceable to you."

" Oh! how shall I ever repay you
my

my dearest aunt, for all the kindness you have had for me?"

"By loving me with the same tenderness you have ever shewn, and by preserving that precious sensibility that renders you so worthy of my affection. The more I see and contemplate you, my Amelina, the more I think I find in you the adorable mother of whom you have been deprived. Yes, you are her perfect image: you have her countenance, her features, and her carriage; the sound and inflexions of your voice are the very same; and to all the qualities that distinguished her, you add those which your father so eminently possessed. Now listen to me with attention; you will hear the melancholy history of your unfortunate parents, and you will participate with me in the re-

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gret that I have unceasingly devoted to their memory.

“ Gonzalez, marquis of Villa-Flora, had no other children except Leontio and myself, whom he cherished with equal tenderness, and for whose education he spared neither trouble nor expence. His rank and employments at the court of Lisbon, and the brilliant circle in which he moved, soon taught us to acquire that dignified ease that is only to be found in the great world; and although we usually passed six months at Villa-Flora, our manners sufficiently proved that we had received our education at the capital. At nineteen my brother added to the graces of his person an uncommon maturity of mind; and I, who was five years older, delighted in the progress that he had made: his taste

as

as well as mine seemed inclined more to retirement than activity—he never was so happy as at Villa-Flora, and if he had been the entire master of his actions, he would seldom have quitted the Castle, whose antiquity and picturesque sequestered situation had in his eyes the most captivating charms. But my father, proud of so accomplished a son, would not allow him to renounce the advantages to which he was so eminently entitled. He had arranged for him a marriage with the daughter of one of the first nobility, and this alliance, equally desired by both families, was to take place as soon as the young lady should attain her sixteenth year. For my own part, affectionately attached to my brother, with whom I wished earnestly to pass my life, and feeling a reluctance to form

form any connexion, I always contrived to elude my father's proposal upon the subject.

“ I believe I have before told you, my dear niece, that your father's appearance was singularly prepossessing: indeed it would have been difficult to have found a more accomplished cavalier. His figure, rather above the middle stature, was admirably well-proportioned, and remarkable for elegance and ease; and the air of affability spread over his countenance added to the satisfaction that every one felt at his approach. Every mother was anxious to secure Leontio as a husband for her daughter, and every highborn damsel sighed for him as a lover: but although much sought after by the fair, his heart continued unmoved.

“ As my brother was one morning walking

walking upon the banks of the Tagus, he was approached by a stranger, who, putting a sealed note into his hand, and hastily retiring, Leontio, surprised at an incident of such mysterious appearance, eagerly opened the note, and found that it contained a most tender declaration from the dowager duchess of Marialva. That lady, the acknowledged favourite of the queen, and who had passed her fortieth year, had fallen passionately in love with the young marquis, and now informed him that, having obtained the royal permission to espouse him, she had written to his father to acquaint him with the happiness that was destined for his son—‘not doubting,’ added she, ‘that he would be extremely flattered by such an alliance.’

“Leontio could not help smiling at

the duchess's proposition; and, in fact, it was extravagantly ridiculous, considering the great disproportion of years between the duchess and himself; but when he had reflected upon the great credit and high station of the lady, he felt that instead of amusing himself with the proposal, he ought directly to consult his father upon the nature of it. He therefore instantly went to him with the note, and entreated him to point out what ought to be his conduct upon the occasion.

'My son,' said Gonzalez, 'I am acquainted with every thing relative to the contents of this extraordinary note; the duchess has already requested my consent, and the queen has had the goodness to inform me that she hoped I would not oppose any obstacle to the

honour

honour that her favourite has intended to confer upon us. I have answered, that I felt myself highly flattered by the duchess of Marialva's kind intentions, but that, unwilling to be in anywise a restraint upon your actions, it was entirely in your breast to decide upon them, and I have obtained two days for the communication of your resolution. I will not conceal from you, my dear son, that your marriage with the duchess would load you with riches, honours, and consideration; but the age of that lady, her boundless ambition, and her haughty and jealous disposition, all unite to convince me that you would be completely unhappy with such a wife; so that, although I foresee the fatal result of your refusal, I am the first to solicit you by no means to accept the offer

of her hand. Yet, flatter not yourself that her proposals may be rejected with impunity; for as she has made known her passion and intentions to the queen and the whole court, and as a woman who thinks herself affronted sets no bounds to her resentment, the implacable temper of the disappointed lady will not fail to draw down ample vengeance upon our house. It is for you, my son, to decide in a case in which your happiness is so materially concerned, and I am ready to acquiesce in your determination; for although I must acknowledge that I should feel considerable regret at your marrying the duchess of Marialva, I do not wish my sentiments to have any influence upon yours; and I would have you be guided by no other.

other motive than the impulse and feelings of your heart.'

" Leontio having answered, that besides his dislike to such a marriage, it was his most anxious desire to comply with the wishes of so good a father, they talked over the best manner of rejecting the proposal. You will easily believe that their refusal of the offer was accompanied by every token of respect, and every expression of politeness that could be devised to blunt the keenness of the disappointment: but they had no effect in calming the irritation of the duchess, or in preventing the explosion they expected from it. Enraged at what she termed an intended insult, she prevailed upon the queen to participate her resentment, by impressing her with a notion that her majesty's commands had

been treated with disrespect: Gonzalez was in consequence dismissed from his employments, and with his whole family exiled to Villa-Flora, under express orders of never appearing within twenty miles of Lisbon.

“ Although my father fully expected to be disgraced, he was not insensible to the loss of his employments and the destruction of his projects for the aggrandizement of his family. Leontio and myself were particularly dear to him; how therefore was it possible for him not to be afflicted by the dissolution of those plans of happiness which he had been framing for us? Alas! he was ignorant that true happiness dwells rather with mediocrity, than in the midst of opulence and splendour. His fortune was considerable, but the desire of increasing

creasing it, and of adding to the grandeur of his house, was his favourite passion: the youth and accomplishments of Leontio still afforded him a hope of executing his original intentions; and as he still had several friends at the court of Lisbon, he imagined that time and proper solicitations would gradually induce the queen to adopt more favourable sentiments. Unwilling, however, that his son should pass his early days in the solitude of the Castle, he signified to him his intention of sending him to visit the different courts of Europe. This order was extremely displeasing to Leontio, whose disposition was singularly turned towards retirement, and especially towards that of Villa-Flora: but his prayers and entreaties were unavailing—the old man remained inflexible; and, persuaded

that Leontio would be reconciled to the scheme as soon as he should have quitted his native country, he gave directions for hastening his departure. A prudent and enlightened man, who was chosen to accompany him during his travels, was sent to the nearest seaport to hire a vessel for their voyage; and when every thing was ready, Gonsalez desired his son to prepare for leaving Villa-Flora that evening, as he intended to conduct him to the vessel that was waiting for him;

" My arguments and caresses made no impression upon the mind of my brother, who seemed overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of quitting Villa-Flora, and whose heart was too full to allow him the communication of his sorrows. Observing him go out of the Castle

Castle an hour before sunset, I followed him at a distance, and at length perceived him sitting precisely in this place, and, hiding myself behind the myrtle bushes, I remarked that he appeared deeply agitated, and that melancholy was imprinted upon his countenance. I was on the point of discovering myself, when, lifting up his eyes and fixing them attentively upon the Castle, he sang, in a feeble voice, and with the most pathetic expression, a poetical adieu to his favourite Villa-Flora. As soon as he had finished, I threw myself into his arms, and mingling my tears with his, had the satisfaction of moderating the excess of his affliction by participating it.—‘ My dearest Lucia! ’ he said, ‘ my adored sister! how much does thy tender friendship console me! Without it,

what should I become at this cruel moment, that I am on the eve of renouncing every thing that contributes to my happiness?—Ah, my Lucia! may Heaven reward thee for the affection thou hast ever testified for me! Thou now perhaps beholdest me for the last time! That idea, painful as it is, has never abandoned me—it is deeply engraved upon my heart. God grant that it be not the harbinger of greater evils!"

" Our discourse was here interrupted by my father, who telling Leontio that all was ready, we sorrowfully went towards the carriage, which presently conveyed away my brother, and left me to return to the Castle in a state of indescribable affliction.

" Leontio employed some time in visiting the principal capitals in Europe; but

but though he perpetually changed the climate and the scene, self-weariness and disgust continually attended him, and his thoughts were ever at Villa-Flora : but when he arrived in Sicily, the picturesque beauties of that charming island, and an intrigue into which he was unhappily seduced, engaged him to make a considerable stay there, until a duel, in which he unfortunately killed his antagonist, one of the most distinguished noblemen of Palermo, obliged him to quit that country, and withdraw from the resentment of his adversary's family. Immediately after that fatal accident, Leontio hastened to Paris, and from thence dispatched his companion to Villa-Flora, to acquaint the marquis with the reasons that had induced him so suddenly leave Sicily. About the same period

the death of the duchess of Marialva put an end to my father's exile and disgrace ; and the queen having consented to my brother's recall to Lisbon, the marquis ordered him to hasten to Portugal, in hopes, as he said, that the returning smiles of fortune might not pass by without advantage. But far from seconding his wishes, my brother always found some pretence for postponing his departure, and two years elapsing without his signifying any intention of returning, Gonzalez, impatient of delays that appeared to have some secret foundation, suddenly repaired to the capital of France. Confounded at this unexpected visit from his father, Leontio, falling at his feet, confessed that love had been the cause of his disobedience.—‘ If,’ continued he, ‘ you will not consent to unite me to

Clementia

Clementia de Montval, whom I adore, and by whom I have the happiness to be loved, you can no longer reckon upon having a son—a refusal will inevitably terminate my existence!"

" My father, who was tenderly attached to Leontio, felt such joy in seeing him again, and such satisfaction at finding him so improved, that his displeasure was immediately removed ; and learning that Clementia's father, the count of Montval, was a man whose birth, fortune, and good character, were unexceptionable, and that his charming daughter possessed in an eminent degree the most desirable perfections of person and mind, he no longer hesitated to accede to the wishes of his son ; and the count entertaining the highest opinion of my brother, he joyfully consented to the alliance,

ance, and Leontio was indissolubly united to Clementia. But, alas! this marriage, that seemed formed under the very auspices of happiness, was immediately succeeded by an event as terrible as it had been unlooked-for. My father died three days after, so suddenly and in such violent convulsions, as to furnish the strongest suspicions that his days had been abridged by poison ; and these suspicions were confirmed upon the dissection of his body : but this melancholy certainty produced no detection of the crime, and the author of it never was discovered.

“ The death of my father, and all the details of this cruel catastrophe, were communicated to me by my brother, who soon conducted his young and interesting wife to Villa-Flora ; and it was not

not long before I felt for Clementia the sincere affection of a sister and a friend. Ah, my Amelina! of what a mother has fate deprived you!—so beautiful, so mild, so benevolent, so full of sensibility! —she was almost the semblance of divinity upon earth.

“ We all went to Lisbon as soon as circumstances allowed, and remained there during two years, in the midst of festivals and entertainments. Although I was continually persecuted to marry, I refused every offer that was made me ; but Clementia declared that she would subdue my obstinacy by inviting to Villa-Flora her brother, the chevalier de Montval, who she was persuaded would prevail upon me to change my resolution. I confess that the idea of being

never

never separated from my brother and Clementia was so grateful to me, that if the chevalier had appeared in person to solicit me, I should probably, on that condition, have accepted his proposals : but he was then in the north of Europe, and it was not his intention to visit his sister for some time.

" A few weeks after your mother's arrival in Portugal, she received the grieved tidings that a sister whom she tenderly loved had suddenly quitted Paris, and that her father had in vain employed every possible method to discover the place of her retreat. This event greatly afflicted Clementia for some months ; but time, and the attentions of her husband, failed not to dissipate her grief, which was succeeded by infinite satisfaction upon

on her finding herself likely to gratify the wishes of Leontio, who was passionately desirous of having children.

“ Following the advice of the physicians, we quitted Lisbon, and established ourselves at Villa-Flora, where continual rejoicings preceded the confinement of the marchioness; and at length, my Amelina, you gratified all hearts by your appearance. But whilst every one was in raptures at the event, and whilst you were baptized with great ceremony and pomp, I felt as it were insensible to the joyous tumult. When you were placed in your cradle, I staid near you to contemplate your infantine graces, and taking you in my arms, I lifted you up towards Heaven, and swore to consecrate my whole life to you, if you should unfortunately be bereaved of your parents. Alas! at the

the moment that my heart formed the sacred engagement, I was informed that my brother had been suddenly seized with a violent pain in his stomach as he was walking with the bishop of Aveiro, who had been invited on purpose to baptize you. Upon repairing to the apartment of Leontio, I found him in so high a fever as to make me fear that all medical assistance would fail; and in a quarter of an hour my apprehensions were but too strongly confirmed—the symptoms of approaching dissolution plainly shewed themselves; and falling into a terrifying delirium, he used the most incoherent language, amongst which, however, I collected these disjointed and memorable words—‘ My father ! I hasten to join you—the same hands—both of us ! Clementia ! Clementia !—so young !—Oh God !

God! my child!...Doria! ferocious, sanguinary Doria!—what cruelty! what wickedness!—I then recollect my brother's having told me that the marchesa Doria, a distinguished Palermite, had been passionately enamoured of him, and that the duel I have mentioned was the result of it. But as he had never heard of her since he left Sicily, I attributed his expressions and the suspicions he seemed to entertain of her, to the manifest disorder of his ideas in those painful and terrifying moments. His delirium continued unabated, and in two hours my unhappy brother expired in my arms, incessantly repeating the names of those that were most dear to him. I was conveyed from his apartment to that of the afflicted Clementia, from whom, notwithstanding her confinement, it had
been

been impossible to conceal the situation and death of her dear Leontio. I shall not attempt to describe to you the grief and despair either of your mother or myself: you may judge of the depth of my affliction by that which I experience after a lapse of so many years."

At this affecting part of her narrative donna Lucia sobbed aloud; Amelina's eyes were bathed in tears, and during several minutes they both remained incapable of speaking; at length donna Lucia recovering herself, thus resumed her narrative:—

" Clementia passed her days and nights in unceasing tears and lamentations: from the moment that her beloved Leontio had breathed his last, her gaiety, her affections, every other sensation, seemed eradicated from her heart—solitude

tude alone had charms for her—and, good God! what solitude did she prefer!—the chapel and sepulchre of Leontio ! It was only upon the cold marble that covered his inanimate remains that she could taste a few moments of repose: nobody presumed to intrude upon her sorrows—every one respected her affliction and her virtuous tenderness. Whilst she thus devoted herself to solitude and grief, a courier from Paris arrived with a letter from her brother, acquainting her that the count their father had fallen into a languishing disorder, from which there was no hope of his recovery, and that during his illness he had expressed the fervent desire of embracing his Clementia before he died. The chevalier de Montval terminated the letter by informing his sister, that if she wished to receive

receive the last blessing of a father, she must without delay undertake a journey into France. As Clementia affectionately loved her father, she did not hesitate to quit the sepulchre of her husband, to obey the calls of filial piety and duty ; and she left Villa-Flora, after having vowed to me that she would return as soon as her object should be accomplished. As you were too delicate to support the fatigues of such a journey, your mother earnestly recommended you to my care, signed a paper appointing me your guardian in case of her death, and quitted me with the most pious resignation.

“ Six weeks elapsed without any tidings from Clementia : Gerardowent daily to Aveiro, and returned without bringing the anxiously-expected intelligence ; and my uneasiness had increased almost

to

to despair, when I one day received a letter bearing the post-mark of Burgos. Observing that the address was in a hand unknown to me, I was seized with such a tremor as made it scarcely possible for me to break the seal; but having with difficulty accomplished it, I perused with consternation the following melancholy contents:—

‘Burgos, in Old Castile, — 17—.

‘SEGNORA,

‘A carriage was lately found near this place, and a woman lying in it, bathed in blood, and almost in the agonies of death; but before she expired she deposed that her name was Juliet—that she was a native of France, in the service of the widow of the marquis of Villa-Flora, a Portuguese nobleman, and that she was travelling

Clementine I have frequently written to her relations; but probably they had quitted Paris, and have not received my letters, for I have hitherto had no answer and am wholly ignorant of the fate of that unfortunate family. I have carefully preserved the letter and deposition forwarded by the alcalde of Rungis, as well as that which was found in the carriage, and which was the same you recollect I had received from the chevalier de Montyaki, announcing the dangerous illness of his father.

"Such, my dear Amelina, is the most exact account of the misfortune of those from whom you received your existence, and I have now only to acquaint you with the projects I have formed for your future happiness. You have just entered your eighteenth year, and it is time

that

that you should think of marriage.. Do not object to me that you are too young, and that you are desirous of always continuing with me, for I promise you never to abandon you whilst I live; but you must recollect that when it shall please Heaven to take me from you, you will find yourself entirely unprotected; so that it is absolutely necessary to procure you some additional support. I had intended to accompany you to London in a few months, but the events of yesterday have decided me to leave the Castle in two days, and I hope in a short time to be gratified by seeing you the happiest of women. I shall not endeavour to find out whether the extraordinary sounds that so alarmed us be supernatural or not, but I am well convinced that both your happiness and my own re-

quire us to quit Villa-Flora for some time. I am not urged to hasten our departure by any idle apprehensions, but motives that I am for the present constrained to withhold from you have induced me to take that resolution."

"Oh, my dear aunt," cried Amelina, "I will do every thing that you desire: I only wish for opportunities of proving the extent of my gratitude and affection. Alas! but for you, what would have been my fate when death deprived me——"

She was here interrupted by donna Lucia uttering a loud scream, and pointing to two men, who fled, and almost instantly disappeared.—"They have been listening to us," said she, rising. "I know not who they are, but it is certain that they have heard every thing I have been

been relating—not indeed that I suppose such to have been their intention, for in that case they would have taken care to have continued undiscovered. Be that as it may, my child, it would be imprudent to remain here any longer; let us therefore return to the Castle without delay."

"I have a favour to beg of you, my dear aunt," said Amelina, as they slowly ascended the avenue, "and I hope you will not refuse it to my prayers."

"What is it, my child?"

"It is the permission of invoking the protection of Heaven, by the side of my father's monument. On the point of quitting the spot where his ashes were deposited, let me for once pay them the tribute of a tear."

"Amelina, you are at liberty to gratify

your wishes. I can no longer refuse a pious desire, so frequently and solemnly repeated; but God grant that my acquiescence may not afterwards occasion you reason for repentance!"

Amelina, embracing her aunt with transport, entreated her not to give way to groundless apprehensions.

"Well," said donna Lucia, "I will take care to conceal them from you; and to convince you of the sincerity of my promise, Gerardo shall after dinner open the gates of the second court, and we will both go and pray near the remains of the object that was so dear to me."

As soon as they reached the Castle, Amelina went up into her boudoir, and opening the window that looked towards the east, set down to finish a landscape,

at

at the same time repeating in her mind the melancholy history of her family. Absorbed in her reflections, she sang a pathetic air that she had learned a few days before, but was suddenly interrupted by the clapping of hands, that seemed to proceed from beyond the walls, when starting to the window, she was incomprehensibly surprised at seeing the two strangers who had put a stop to her aunt's conversation near the torrent. As soon as they perceived her, one of them taking the other by the arm, conducted him reluctantly towards the wood, which they entered, and presently disappeared.

Amelia determined not to acquaint her aunt with this new incident, under the idea that it might occasion her alarms at once useless and unfounded. The strangers appeared young, and dress-

could you imagine that I cherished such a thought?"

Gerardo soon after calling to them that all was ready, donna Lutia, Amelina, and Marcelosa, hastened to join him at the entrance into the second court, where the old man began by endeavouring to lift the gates from off their hinges; but his strength being inadequate to the attempt, he tried to force the lock, but was equally foiled in his endeavours.

"What are we to do now?" said Amelina.

Gerardo seemed occupied in thinking how he could gratify his young lady, and after a momentary reflection—"I have just hit upon it," exclaimed he—"yes, I shall manage it. I shall be gone only a minute or two—stay here until I come back."

Upon

Upon his return with a vast quantity of old keys—"Look, signora," he said; "I recollect having seen these keys amongst a heap of old iron, and perhaps we shall find one of them that will fit the lock."

But he tried them in vain one after the other—they were all either too little or too big. There now remained but two, and Amelina had lost all hope of success, when the last key easily turned round within the lock, and the visor was immediately removed—"Signora," said the old man, when he had advanced into the court, "we shall not find such difficulty in getting into the chapel, for I already see that the door of it is half open; but I must first make a passage for you through the thorns and briers.

bles that have quite grown over the path since I was last here."

Amelina followed Gerardo step by step, secretly blaming the slowness of his operations, but was on the point of arriving at the wished-for chapel, when, thinking that she saw something white lying amongst the thorns, she without hesitation rushed towards it, and—oh, Heavens! what an object of horror and of pity!—she perceived a new-born infant, perfectly naked and bloody, stretched upon the ground!

At the plaintive exclamations of Amelina, her aunt and the old servants hurried to the spot, and were sensibly affected by this cruel and extraordinary spectacle. Marcelosa, taking the infant in her arms and kissing it—"Divine Goodness!"

Goodness!" cried she, " it is as cold as marble!"

" Amelina!" said donna Lucia, in a tremulous voice, " you would visit the chapel!"

The daughter of Leontio remained silent and confused.—" Let us fly," continued donna Lucia—" let us quickly fly! —Carry away that unfortunate infant— and do you, Gerardo, instantly shut those gates, that ought never to have been opened.—Unhappy being! that hast received life only to be deprived of it at the moment of thy birth, what atrocious hand has inflicted upon thee a fate so wicked and so cruel? Art thou the offspring of a crime? and if thou art, shouldst thou bear the punishment of it?—Unnatural parents! how could you abandon—how could you destroy this innocent

innocent and helpless creature?—Poor infant! whatever be the circumstances that caused thy dissolution, thy pure spirit, without doubt, reposest in the bosom of the Divinity!"

It was to the inanimate child that donna Lucia addressed these feeling words, as they were conveying it to the pavilion, whilst the afflicted Ameline continued abundantly to shed tears. At last her aunt, assuming an air of coldness, attempted to tranquillize her niece.—" You should not give yourself up," she said, " to unavailing sorrow: the crime is committed; neither you nor I could foresee it, or prevent it, and all we now have to do is to preserve a profound and impenetrable secrecy. Dreadful mysteries are doubtless connected with this event; but let us then de-
vour

want to unveil them; for who knows whether we ourselves might not become the victims of our curiosity?—Now indeed I am more than ever determined to quit the Castle of Villa-Flora, and if I could depart to-morrow, I would not hesitate to do so; but that I know to be impossible.—Gerardo," continued she, "you must bury this hapless child in some unfrequented spot; hasten to do so, and remember to be perfectly silent upon the subject: and I earnestly recommend it to you, Marcelosa, never to mention a syllable of this deplorable adventure."

When Gerardo was gone to execute the orders he had received, donna Lucia told Amelina that she should retire to her apartment for the remainder of the evening, and could not see her until

the

the next morning.—“I wish to be alone, my child,” said she to her niece, “in order to calm the agitation into which I have been thrown by the various incidents that so lately have occurred; and it is essential that, previous to our departure, I should arrange some papers of consequence to the family. You must not therefore be uneasy at my retiring so early, since I have informed you of the reasons for it.”

Amelina was too much affected to make any reply; but after pressing donna Lucia to her heart, retired to her pavilion, and shut herself up in the belvedere.

CHAPTER IV.

INSENSIBLE to the sublime spectacle of the declining sun, which she had never before contemplated without emotion, Amelina seated herself near a table in the belvedere, and fell into a train of gloomy and melancholy thoughts. So many remarkable events had succeeded each other with such rapidity in the course of a few hours, that it was very natural for her to retrace and endeavour to disentangle them from the confusion in which they were heaped together within her mind. The history of her unhappy

unhappy parents, of whose tenderness, if they had lived, she formed the most interesting picture, again drew tears from her eyes. Her thoughts then turned upon the tolling of the bell, which she concluded was connected with the story of the infant she had found; and that mystery of infamy occasioned her an involuntary tremor. Then it was that her vision occurred to her as strongly, partaking of reality, and as interwoven with the last discovery, which she considered as the basis and foundation of all the incidents that had preceded it. But for the reproaches of her aunt, she never would have given up her enterprise, but would have continued her researches until the cause of the infant's death had been detected; but the fear of displeasing donna Lucia checked her curiosity, which

which she did not hesitate to sacrifice, rather than give her the smallest dissatisfaction.

Proceeding, as it were, to analyze her ideas, Amelina felt a singular degree of emotion when she recalled to mind the sudden and renewed appearance of the two strangers, who had fled so precipitately that she had been unable to distinguish the features of either of them. It was so extraordinary a circumstance to see any one in the domains of Villa-Flora, that she could not help feeling surprised at such an incident: she at first suspected them to be the authors of the child's murder, and that it was not impossible for them to have found their way into the Castle; but a momentary reflection convinced her of the improbability of her suspicion, and she

she then thought that they could not have scaled the lofty walls without having been discovered in the attempt.

After a variety of conjectures, the fruitlessness of which was apparent to her, because she could never satisfy herself with any of them, her thoughts turned upon her approaching departure, her arrival at Lisbon, and the pleasure that her journey and novel mode of life would probably procure her. Persuaded that her aunt would undertake nothing but to promote and secure her happiness, she resolved implicitly to follow her advice, and to accept the husband she should destine for her, provided her heart did not decidedly revolt against the choice. She was now in too seducing a path to stop short in such a current of ideas: the project of her marriage gave rise

rise to another prospect, which was quickly succeeded by a third ; and thus wandering from plan to plan, Amelina finished by entirely suspending the melancholy thoughts which a few minutes before had engrossed the faculties of her mind.

How quickly is affliction dissipated at the early years of Amelina !—how rapidly is the image of misfortune effaced by the spirits of seventeen ! Happy age !—period of innocence and of happiness ! Alas ! how short is thy reign ! it flies like a light cloud that the wind dispenses in the skies. It is in the course of a tempestuous life that we frequently think with tenderness on that short, that fleeting period, which nature seems to have destined for the enjoyment of real pleasure, when misfortune is but a name

—when

—when every thing seems to smile upon us, and when we experience none of the baleful passions of the mind! And when cold and remorseold age has almost chilled our senses and annihilated our faculties, the recollection of that season of delight still embellishes the evening of life, whilst the illusion that retraces it to us draws from us the soothings tear of sensibility.

The sun had long disappeared, and the twilight already showed but a pale and uncertain glimmering, when Anna, recovering from the reverie in which she had been plunged, and surprised at the lateness of the hour, placed herself at the western window to enjoy the progressive advances of the shades of night. The gloomy impressions made upon her mind had given way to a tender sort of melancholy,

splendour, that was infinitely pleasing to her heart; and this splendour, renewing all her susceptibility, added a variety of charms to the objects which she admired, and which gradually yielded to the approaches of obscurity. All nature seemed at peace—the leaves of the trees were not in the least shaken by the breeze—the plaintive nightingale alone was heard to chant, in a melancholy adagio.

In this temper of mind, and decked out with the serenity of the night, this daughter of Leontine was about to lay herself upon her knees, to invoke the blessing of the Supreme Being. Before she had designed herself to sleep; but, hearing an indistinct noise, that induced her to turn over the blanket, she presently ascertained that it proceeded from a noise which

which seemed approaching the Castle with great speed. The moon at that moment appearing above the horizon, discovered to her in the avenue a horseman, who alighted at the entrance of the Castle, and knocked frequently and violently at the gate. It is impossible to describe the astonishment which this new incident created in the mind of Amelina, already, from preceding circumstances, disposed to consider as romantic and mysterious the most trifling and probable events.

Finding that no one answered his applications at the gate, the horseman repeated them with still greater violence, which awaking Gerardo, he sallied into the court to inquire into the nature of the disturbance ; and Amelina, continuing at the window, saw him advance with

with a lantern, and heard him ask who it was, and whence he came, that thundered so vehemently at the Castle-gate at that unseemly hour of the night?

"One in haste, you may be sure," answered the stranger: "but open the gate without delay, and conduct me to donna Lucia, for I have a letter of the greatest importance to deliver to her."

"But once more—whence come you? and who are you?"

"Friend, I have no time to answer all your questions; I am in haste—open the gate without delay."

"I shall do no such thing, until you tell me who you are."

"Mistrustful and obstinate old man!" cried the horseman, in a formidable tone; "remember what I have told you. Open

the gate!—hesitate not a moment, or
wee to your mistress, donna Lucia!"

Gerardo still refused to comply, but requested the stranger to wait whilst he went to donna Lucia for her orders. Upon his return, however, and before he introduced the nocturnal visitor into the Castle, he peeped cautiously through the wicket, and ascertaining that there was only one person at the gate, immediately opened it without reluctance.

Amelina listened with avidity to the conversation; her curiosity augmented at every syllable, and she would have sacrificed every earthly enjoyment to be informed of the contents of the mysterious dispatches; but she saw with vexation that she should be obliged to wait until morning, as it would be very indiscreet

discreet in her to disturb her aunt so late an hour of the night. With eyes fixed upon the vaulted passage, she impatiently looked for the arrival of the courier, who having fastened the bridle of his horse to an iron ring within the wall, was preceded by Gerardo, and introduced into the pavilion of donna Lucia.

Amelina renewed her attention, in the hope of collecting some intelligence from the courier's discourse during his passage across the court; but her hopes were completely frustrated—not a single word was uttered either by him or by Gerardo. She would have felt in some degree gratified if she could have perceived the features of the stranger, but an enormous hat, that was pulled over his eyes, and entirely concealed his face,

deprived her of that trifling satisfaction. Lights were soon seen in the apartment of donna Lucia, but the windows were closed; Amelina however thought she heard a confused noise, interrupted by long pauses, and that the conversation was particularly animated.

An hour had passed before Amelina saw the stranger reappear with the old porter; they both traversed the court a second time without speaking, and the courier, leading his horse through the covered way, immediately remounted, and rapidly proceeded down the avenue, whilst Gerardo carefully closed the gate, and thoughtfully retired to the pavilion.

A calm and impressive silence now reigned around the Castle, and the moon, surrounded by a dim white circle, spread over every object a wan and feeble light,
that

that gave an awful and terrific character to that ancient and venerable residence. The vast and irregular mass, blackened by succeeding centuries—its lofty towers, whose summits had braved the power of time, and its chapel, that contained the bones of so many illustrious dead—all united to inspire Amelina with a religious sort of reverence and terror: yielding to these emotions, she abruptly quitted the belvedere, with an intention of seeking shelter from her fears in sleep; and, notwithstanding the agitation she had undergone, she was not long before she enjoyed the repose she so desired.

Poor innocent Amelina! whilst refreshing sleep pours into thy mind the balm of consolation—whilst, perhaps, a seducing dream charms thee with an illusion still more alarming, thou art ignorant

part of the dreadful blow that circumstances are about to point against thy heart; thou knowest not that thy waking hour will be enlightened by the greatest of misfortunes. Interesting creature! mayest thou find in the soft slumbers that thou enjoyest, the strength and resignation necessary to support the lot that awaits thee!

Amelina awoke the next morning at a much later hour than usual; but instead of experiencing those delightful sensations that at her early years succeeded a night of undisturbed repose, she felt oppressed by a weight of grief for which she was altogether unable to account. As soon as with her customary piety she had addressed her fervent prayers to the Creator, she quitted her apartment, with the intention of saluting donna Lucia,

and

and felt some surprise at finding neither Marcelosa nor Gerardo in the kitchen, which she was under the necessity of traversing; but her astonishment increased, when, on knocking at her aunt's door, she was not, as usual, desired to enter the apartment. Upon her opening the door, and not seeing any one in the room, she hastily ran into the adjoining one, loudly calling upon donna Lucia—but all was silent and deserted; and Amelina, struck with terror and amazement, returned into the bedchamber of her aunt, and saw a letter and a casket upon a table in one corner of the room. Her tremor was so great, that she with difficulty opened the letter, which she observed was addressed to her, and read the following contents:—

" The dreaded moment, which all my foresight could not prevent, is at length arrived—the blow is struck, and our separation is the result of it. Oh, my Amelina! how dearly we both pay for your imprudent curiosity!—With how much reason will you regret my deplorable acquiescence! If a few hours had elapsed, our safety and happiness would have been ensured, and death alone could have separated me from you; but our destiny is now changed, and an imperious necessity obliges me to abandon the daughter of my heart, and to fly from her for whom I would willingly resign my life. Why could I not avert such alarming circumstances by my death?—why was I not allowed to sacrifice myself for my Angelina?—But I am not permitted to dispose of my

my days; and I am even denied the melancholy pleasure of seeing and embracing you for the last time. Seek not to penetrate the obscure secret that I am under the absolute necessity of concealing from you—the most terrible misfortunes would be the consequence. Nor can I communicate to you the place of my retreat, or the length of time during which my absence will continue. God alone knows what is to happen: let us hope that his goodness will reunite us, but let us beware of looking into futurity; and be persuaded, my dear child, that whatever may come to pass, I shall always have your image before my eyes, and that even in your retirement I shall watch over your personal security.

"As soon as you shall have perused this letter, which I am well-assured will

pour affliction into your heart, you must, without delay, repair to the convent of Santa Maria. You will readily perceive the impropriety of remaining at Villa-Flora during my absence, especially as Marcelosa and Gerardo must accompany me. The latter will however conduct you to the convent, and I shall inform the abbess of your intentions. It is needless for me to recommend to you the acquisition of her friendship and good offices—your mild and affectionate manners cannot fail of securing you an interest in her heart.

"Preserve with care the casket which you will find upon the table, and which contains a sum of money and a few trifles: use the money with economy, but carry not that virtue to excess. Have no apprehensions for the future; I will not

not fail to provide for your wants, and the distance that will separate us will cease to be one when your comfort is concerned.

" If you love me as affectionately as I am sure you do, you will calmly submit to the change you will undergo, and you will try to subdue an unavailing sorrow. Take example from me—I carry despair and death in my heart, and yet I am—tranquil and resigned.

" Farewell, my best beloved!—farewell, my tender Amelina! The hour approaches—and I quit the Castle whilst you are wrapped in sleep—I could not bear your overpowering and heart-breaking adieu! My tears flow in abundance—I feel as if I were expiring!—But it must be done—I must depart—I must

save——I go! I go!—I cannot hesitate any longer!

"DONNA LUCIA DE VILLA-FLORE.

"P. S. Burn this letter before you leave the Castle. If any one should ask you any questions, endeavour to elude them, and let these words, *prudence* and *discretion*, be ever present in your thoughts."

When she had finished the perusal of this fatal letter, Amelina, pale and gasping almost for breath, threw herself into a chair, and her eyes fixed upon the same object, remained motionless a considerable time; but at length, hearing a noise, she lifted up her eyes, and saw Gerardo entering the chamber. A sigh escaped

escaped from her labouring bosom, and an abundant flow of tears in a great measure relieved her from her oppression, whilst the affectionate old porter employed every method in his power to console her.

Alleviated by the effusion of her grief, Amelina was gradually pacified, and having again read the letter, and taken courage to inquire of Gerardo into the causes of the precipitate departure of her aunt, he told her that a courier had arrived in the night with dispatches of importance for donna Lucia, who had wept bitterly at the perusal of them, and having hastily packed up her clothes, had left the Castle at daylight with Marcelosa, in a carriage that waited for them at the bottom of the avenue. He added, that he had received orders to

repair

repair the next morning to Aveiro, where he was to find directions for his future destination.

"My good Gerardo," said Amelina, with anxiety, "I entreat you to let me go with you to-morrow to Aveiro, where my aunt, without doubt, waits for you to join her: I wish once more to see her, to throw my arms around her neck, and to beseech her by no means to abandon me. If I cannot prevail upon her—if she persist in her barbarous intention, she will not at least deny me her last blessing. Surely she will not separate from her Amelina without personally assuring her of her tenderness and affection! Do not, my dear, good Gerardo! —do not deprive me of this valued consolation—it is the only mark of attachment that I expect and require from you."

"My

" My dear young lady, I could not refuse you any thing you ask ; but it is my duty also to inform you that you will not find donna Lucia at Aveiro, since she told me herself that she should proceed to her journey's end without once stopping upon the road. I am to be furnished with her final orders by a person at Aveiro, so that I am confident your excursion would be fruitless, and you would moreover have the regret of disobeying the wishes of your aunt."

" Well then, in that case we will say no more about it. No one shall ever cast any reproaches upon me ; I will presently set out for Santa Maria : but when you see my aunt, tell her, Gerardo, that I punctually executed every thing she ordered : tell her that I even sought to restrain my tears——"

But

But whilst she spoke, she testified how great was her affliction—how vain was her endeavour, for she again burst into a flood of tears ; and Gerardo contemplated her with tenderness, and without venturing to interrupt a sorrow so respectable.

" Good Gerardo," she resumed, " these tears are the last that I will shed. Reason dictates the conduct I should pursue, and I will resolve on complying with its voice. But it is now ten—we have no time to lose, and I will get ready such things as I mean to take with me to the convent."

When Gerardo had quitted the apartment, Amelina placed the fatal letter in her bosom until she should find a convenient opportunity to burn it, and taking the casket under her arm, repaired to her own

own room to make the arrangements for her departure. At twelve o'clock every thing was ready: one of the mules was loaded with Amelina's baggage; the harp was carefully deposited upon its back, and the afflicted daughter of Leontio, with a heart bursting with sorrow and disquiet, assisted by Gerardo, mounted the other mule, and traversing the court and vaulted passage, slowly and mournfully descended the avenue that now conducted her from the venerable mansion of her forefathers.

The southern wind in the mean while arose with great fury; the sky was suddenly obscured, and every thing announced a violent and approaching storm. Heavy and black clouds, motionless as rocks, seemed almost to repose upon the earth; from their edges

of

of dusky red issued a hollow and terrifying sound ; an oppressive degree of heat inflamed the atmosphere, and all nature preserved a most melancholy silence. The minutest animals foresaw the coming tempest, and large flights of birds sought an asylum in the forest.

Having quitted the avenue, Amelina and her guide turned towards the right, and following the sinuosities of the valley, ascended a steep and rocky hill, and stopped upon its summit to allow their panting mules a moment to recover their breath. From thence, too, Amelina cast a last look upon the much-regretted castle, which, as they descended the hill, was completely hidden from her view.

Absorbed in the most sorrowful reflections, she had paid no attention to the tempest that was gathering; but the thunder

thunder grumbling at a distance, and the lightning bursting forth at intervals, on a sudden awakened her out of her lethargy—" Oh, heavens ! Gerardo, we are lost—we are destroyed!" she exclaimed : " how shall we avoid the storm that is ready to overwhelm us?"

The old man was in the mean while looking round for some spot where they might remain in sheltered security from the tempest, and seeing a half-ruined habitation at a little distance from the roadside, he persuaded Amelina to take refuge there.

Whilst Amelina, seated upon a stone under an archway amongst the ruins, attentively considered the gloomy scene that nature presented to her view, a violent gust of wind suddenly howling in her ears, tore up in its passage the scattered trees

trees upon the plain, and dispersed clouds of dust along the valley. The obscurity was redoubled; the objects were distinguishable only by the frequent and vivid flashes of lightning, and a terrible explosion taking place directly over the ruins, filled with alarm the already-afrighted persons that had taken shelter there. Torrents of rain now fell impetuously on all sides; it seemed as if all the cataracts of heaven had opened. The noise of the rain, the unceasing lightning, the loud and uninterrupted grumbling of the thunder, and the repercussion of the echoes, formed a scene at once sublime, mournful, and terrific. The storm was happily of short duration; the thunder gradually became less distinct, and in about an hour the weather was sufficiently calm to allow Amelina and her attendant

attendant to proceed. As they approached the convent, they heard the sound of bells, which they supposed were summoning the nuns to vespers; but they were much astonished at finding several carriages at the convent door, and were informed by the *tourière* that it was impossible for Amelina to be immediately admitted to the monastery, as a novice was on the point of taking the veil, and the abbess was preparing for the ceremony. She added, that the carriages at the door belonged to the most respectable families of Aveiro, who had arrived to be witnesses of the ceremony, and that Amelina would do well to follow their example. Desirous of being present at so novel an exhibition, Amelina readily consented to follow the *tourière* to the church,

church, whilst Gerardo, with his mules, remained at the door of the convent.

The church of the Carmelites was crowded with people, amongst whom Amelina remarked several whose dress and appearance denoted them to be persons of distinction. The curtain that usually concealed the nuns from the public eye was drawn up; and, to add to the solemnity of the day, the high altar was magnificently decorated, and the church most splendidly illuminated.

At the entrance of the daughter of Leontio, a confused murmur arose amongst the spectators, by which she was considerably intimidated; she knew not whether to advance or recede—but, perceiving that the murmur was particularly flattering to her, she continued to proceed,

proceed, and to seek for a place where she might remain until the commencement of the ceremony. The company politely making way for her, she arrived very near the sanctuary without finding a vacant seat, as she had wished; but an elderly lady perceiving her distress, kindly beckoned to her, and ordered a chair to be placed next to her own. "My sweet child," said the lady, inclining towards Amelina, when she was seated, "do you know any thing about the novice who is to profess?"

"I am wholly ignorant about her, madam," said Amelina.

"Well then, I will tell you, for there is certainly something very mysterious in her history. About three years since a French lady presented herself, without any kind of introductory letter, to the abbess

abbess Theresa, and desired to be admitted as a boarder in the convent. As the lady, who appeared to be about thirty years of age, had a distinguished figure, a very agreeable countenance, and the most easy and insinuating manners, the abbess readily acceded to her request, and she was immediately introduced into the convent, under the name of Rosalina. Notwithstanding the kind attentions of the abbess, who early conceived for her a great degree of friendship, she never could prevail upon Rosalina to communicate either the name of her family, or the circumstancess that had conducted her into Portugal. After passing two years at Santa Maria, she declared to the abbess that she was resolved to become a nun, if she might be allowed to be a member of that community;

munity; to which the abbess joyfully consenting, Rosalina paid down the usual sum requisite on such occasions, and directly assumed the dress of a novice. The period of her noviciate being now expired, she is about to receive the veil from the bishop of Aveiro, who, in honour of the abbess Theresa, is arrived, with the most distinguished persons of that town."

"Your account, *segnora*," said Amelina, with a timid voice, "has singularly interested me; I long to know more about the French novice, and I have an uncommon desire to see the abbess."

"What, you have never seen the famous Theresa! Is that possible?"

"No, indeed I have never had that pleasure, though I have often been at the church of Santa Maria; but this evening

I hope to gratify my curiosity, for I am going to stay in the convent for some time."

"I give you joy, my dear: there is little happiness superior to that of living with so virtuous, so holy a woman, as the abbess of the Carmelites. During the many years that she has filled that dignified station, she has been wholly occupied with the care of her salvation. With the most enlarged and penetrating mind, no one is more humble, more modest, more pious, than the sanctified Theresa. But I should never finish, were I to undertake the enumeration of the good qualities and rare accomplishments that have procured her the greatest and most deserved esteem and respect, not only in the province of Beira, but even throughout all Portugal."

The

The prolix signora would not, however, so soon have terminated her eulogium, if a general silence had not warned her of the beginning of the ceremony.

The nuns, each with a lighted flambeau in her hand, proceeded in pairs, slowly up the choir, and ranged themselves in a half-circle before the altar. In the midst of them was the novice, towards whom all eyes were instantly turned, and whom Amelina had an opportunity of considering at her leisure. Rosalina was small of stature, but her elegant and delicate limbs had been moulded by the graces themselves; and fine auburn hair, large and languishing eyes, a small nose, and vermillion lips, were the features that composed the ravishing beauty of the novice. Her charms were heightened by the most brilliant and

costly ornaments ; she was covered with gold and pearls, and her hair, her arms, and her neck, glittered with the most valuable jewels. Never was a beauteous victim more magnificently decorated for a sacrifice.

By the side of the pale and dejected Rosalina stood the august Theresa, who, like the nuns, was without a veil, as is customary only on such occasions ; and near the altar, arrayed in the pontifical robes, and ornamented with the distinguishing marks of his dignity, sat the venerable bishop of Aveiro.

When Amelina contemplated the majestic carriage and grave countenance of the abbess, she felt an emotion of respect, something like what we are accustomed to experience at the sight of those objects which have been consecrated by religious

ligious veneration ; and indeed the lofty port and solemn air of the dignified Theresa failed not to impress all minds with a deep sense of her piety and virtues. She appeared to be between forty and fifty years of age ; and though penitence, fasts, and mortifications, had made great ravages amongst her features, it was easy to discover that she had been handsome. There was however something particularly dark and gloomy about her eyes, and in the usual expression of her countenance ; and if her good qualities had not been generally known, she might have been suspected of being rigid and unfeeling.

The attention of the spectators being secured, and the greatest silence reigning throughout the church, father Jeromio, a Franciscan friar, director of the Carmelites,

and well known to Amelina, entered the choir, and kneeling for an instant before the altar, ascended the pulpit, and began a very eloquent discourse upon the approaching sacrifice of Rosalina. At the very moment that he was thundering with vehemence against the seductive pleasures of the world, the novice, who had attentively listened to him with eyes fixed upon the ground, having accidentally looked towards the spectators, was suddenly taken ill, and staggering back, fell fainting upon the pavement. This luckless event created general confusion : Rosalina was instantly removed, and the abbess was soon afterwards informed that the serious indisposition of the novice would not permit her to pronounce her vows upon that day. Although this information was publicly notified, father

Jeromio

Jeromio did not desist from his discourse; but the cause that had drawn so much company to the church no longer existing, the crowd began to disperse, and the number of his auditors was considerably diminished.

When the sermon was finished, and the nuns were about to retire, with the abbess at their head, a whole troop of devotees ran up to the holy Theresa, and throwing themselves upon their knees, implored the inestimable favour of her benediction. The abbess, from motives of humility, seemed disposed to resist their entreaties; but fresh clamours arising, she was at last constrained to, yield to the reiterated prayers of the faithful and pious worshippers that surrounded her. Lifting up to heaven her eyes, through which her whole soul

seemed to find a passage, and then lowering them with compunction, she distributed her blessing to the prostrate crowd, and solemnly retired from the choir, followed by the nuns. The curtain immediately dropped behind the grating, the lights were extinguished, and Amelina quitting the church, returned to the lodge of the *tourière*, where Gerardo had deposited her baggage.

When the abbess was informed that the heiress of Villa-Flora awaited the moment of admittance, she ordered her to be introduced into the convent, and excused her inability to receive her, by alleging a visit from the bishop, and the duties she owed to the community.

When Gerardo took leave of Amelina, she burst into a flood of tears, and

great

great was her emotion in bidding him farewell.

The fatal door is now closed, and Amelina is now deprived of the liberty she had so long enjoyed. In exchange for so valuable a blessing, may she at least find the wished-for quiet of the soul in the residence of the two children of Heaven—Peace and Virtue !

CHAPTER V.

THE houses of a few persons employed in the exterior service of the monastery were the only habitations that were near it.

The buildings that composed the convent were spacious and magnificent, and consisted of four structures adjoining to each other, and forming a complete square, the centre of which was an immense court planted with lofty trees, and surrounded by a wide but melancholy cloister. The sides of the edifice that fronted the north and south, as well as that which looked towards the east, contain-

ed

ed the cells of the nuns ; and the church, which was in the western part of the building, was accessible as well from the interior of the convent as from without ; but an iron grating separated the choir from the sanctuary. There was likewise in the sacristy a small door that connected the convent with the church, but the key was entrusted entirely to the lay sisters, whose cells were so constructed as to afford an easy communication with the nuns, as well as with such strangers as came to the convent upon business ; and the apartments of the abbess, in the centre of the eastern building, enabled her to see every thing that passed around the monastery.

Whilst Beatrix, the *tourière*, was conducting Amelina to the cell that had been prepared for her, the latter inquired

whether she might hope to see the abbess during the evening?

“ That is utterly impossible,” answered sister Beatrix ; “ but to-morrow, immediately after morning service, I am to have the honour of introducing you to our holy mother.”

“ But could not I see the novice who was taken ill at church ? I cannot express how much she has interested me, and I should be happy to tell her how anxious I am for her recovery.”

“ Alas, signora ! the dear sister Rosalina is wholly incapable of seeing any body. Her fever is so violent, that the good mother, Santa Theela, the chief of our infirmary, has expressly forbid her seeing any one, lest the noise should add to her agitation ; and this order has greatly afflicted the rest of the community,

nity, who are all fond of Rosalina. She is indeed an angel upon earth; her mildness and good-nature are without example, and I am very sure, signora, that when you are acquainted with her, you will be as much attached to her as we are."

After traversing the cloister, Beatrix and Amelina ascended a great staircase, conducting to the upper story of the eastern building, and entered a long passage that was lighted from above, and contained on each side a variety of cells. After a few paces, Beatrix opened a door, and ushered Amelina into a chamber, which, though small, was extremely cheerful and airy. The bed, the curtains, the whole furniture, and even the walls, were of rose-colour; and a variety of china vases, filled with flowers, decorated the veranda of this tasteful cell,

whither

whither the harp and other baggage of Amelina had already been conveyed.

"Oh, sister Beatrix," said the daughter of Leontio, smiling, "what a charming room! Nothing in the world can be more inviting!"

"True, signora; and, in fact it is our best apartment. Our lady-abbess only gives it to those whom she highly values, and she expressly ordered it to be prepared for you. Look," continued she, opening the window, "see what a delightful prospect you have!"

Nothing could indeed surpass the beauty of the landscape, which Amelina long dwelt upon with admiration: a very large garden, terminated by a park of great extent, first attracted her attention; her eyes then wandered to a hill, which she recollects to be the same from whence

whence she had had a last glimpse of Villa-Flora, and which arose just beyond the lofty boundaries of the park. This hill was higher than that on which the Castle was situated, and consequently concealed it from her view; but she saw with much emotion a great part of the forest, bounded by the distant mountains, that arose amphitheatrically behind the mansion and domain of Villa-Flora.

"Well, signora," said Beatrix, "did I say too much in calling it a delightful prospect? If you wish to walk over the grounds to-morrow, I hope you will allow me to accompany you, and point out to you the curiosities of the park and garden."

"I should like it exceedingly, sister Beatrix—you could not have made me a more desirable proposal; and to-morrow,

row, if you call me at break of day, we will go over the whole of that magnificent enclosure."

"With great pleasure, "segnora ; I must first, however, obtain permission of the abbess to accompany you, though I imagine not that she will refuse it. But do you know that what you propose doing is more like a short journey than a walk ? It is not less than three miles from hence to the Solitude at the most distant part of the park : but no matter ; you are young, signora ; and though I shall very soon be eight-and-forty years of age, I shall be able to keep up with you. I must now leave you, for you know that in a house like ours there is always something to be done, and, thank Heaven ! I have full as much upon my hands as I know how to get through. I shall

soon

soon return with your supper, but after this evening you are to partake of the table of the abbess."

As soon as she was gone, Amelina returned to the window, and enjoyed the enchanting picture of the setting sun, that was withdrawing from the world upon an horizon almost blazing with its light. A few clouds, the remnants of the storm, still wandered under a canopy of azure; and a mixture of gold, purple, violet, and red, gave a splendid colouring to these condensed vapours, which, like a light drapery, that in veiling a beautiful statue still more agreeably displays its elegant proportions, seemed to conceal one part of the sky only to give a more brilliant effect to the remainder.

Beatrix soon reappeared, with a lay sister, who brought Amelina a supper, which

which her long abstinence rendered both necessary and palatable ; for at her age, as at all others, whatever be the vexation of the mind, every one is forced to yield to the imperious demands of nature.

Whilst Amelina enjoyed her supper, Beatrix informed her that the abbess had consented to their intended visit to the park, but that she desired Amelina's company at breakfast upon their return.

"Good-night, *segnora*," said Beatrix, as she shut the door, after the lay sister had retired with the supper-things—
"good-night ! and may your guardian angel hover over and preserve you!"

In the solitude of her cell, the daughter of Leontio could not avoid thinking of the extraordinary event that had so hastily consigned her to her present habitation ;

bitation; and she wept bitterly, on reflecting that her aunt had left her without having even given her a gleam of hope as to her return.

How melancholy is the lot of a young woman, who, having never before quitted her peaceful mansion, finds herself suddenly conveyed into a sanctified sort of prison, inhabited by a world entirely novel and unknown! Such was the situation of Amelina, who, finding herself entirely isolated, ignorant of the length of time she was destined to pass within the convent, and foreseeing no early prospect of a release, felt all the misery of her fate; and the bitterness of her reflections was redoubled. She concluded that the mystery of the infant was connected with that which had occasioned the abrupt departure of her aunt; but besides

besides donna Lucia's prohibition by any means to attempt the penetration of it, Amelina's natural good sense was sufficient to demonstrate the fruitlessness of her researches. After again perusing her aunt's letter, in which she thought she found sufficient motive for consolation in the promise that donna Lucia would always watch over her, Amelina felt greatly composed and comforted: she determined, though with reluctance, to burn the letter; and this sacrifice was not executed without a pang.

Arming herself, however, with courage and resignation, Amelina submitted to the decrees of Providence, and resolved to await with patience the decision of her fate. She then determined upon examining the casket which her aunt had recommended to her care, and which

which her affliction and subsequent occupations had hitherto prevented her from inspecting. Upon opening it she found two purses full of gold, and under them a red leather case and portfolio, from the former of which she pulled out a gold snuffbox, splendidly set round with diamonds; but a miniature of donna Lucia upon the lid, surrounded by brilliants, instantly caught her attention, and gave her far more satisfaction than the value of the jewels that shone around it. In the snuffbox were two handsome diamond rings, and the following note, in the handwriting of donna Lucia:—

“ If circumstances should force you to sell this box, fail not to save the portrait, which may easily be taken off by removing the diamond setting; friend-

ship

ship as well as gratitude will doubtless engage you always to preserve it."

"Yes!" cried Amelina, kissing the miniature with transport; "yes, I will ever carefully keep this precious testimony of your tenderness! Death alone shall separate me from an object so dear to me!"

Having pronounced these words, in a tone as affectionate as if she had been speaking to her aunt, she replaced the snuff box, and examined the portfolio, which contained a certificate of her birth, signed by the bishop of Aveiro, who had baptised her, and the letter from the alcalde of Burgos, with the deposition of the dying maid-servant, and the letter that had been found in the carriage of the marchioness of Villa-Flora.

Satisfied with her inspection, she took some

some money out of one of the purses, locked up the box, and finding herself fatigued, retired to her bed, where she presently fell into a profound sleep, from which she was roused at the dawn of day by Beatrix knocking at her door.

"I will open it this instant," said Amelina, while her half-closed eyes denoted the interruption of her repose.

"Heavenly Jesus!" exclaimed Beatrix, when the door was opened; "surely I have disturbed you too soon, for you look as if you were still asleep?"

"True, sister; but the freshness of the morning air will speedily awaken me."

"I hope, however, signora, that you have enjoyed repose—but perhaps the change of beds may have prevented you.

—Holy

—Holy Virgin! you look paler than yesterday!"

"I assure you that I am by no mean unwell."

"Heaven be praised! I am easy since you say so."

Whilst Amelina was dressing, and the talkative *tourière* was examining with attention every part of the baggage, that lay scattered about the room

—“Sister Beatrix,” said Amelina, “do me the favour to accept this small mark of my regard,” (at the same time slipping a few crusadoes into her hand), “and by no means think of offering me any thanks for such a trifle.”

Beatrix was amazed at the sight of such a quantity of gold. “Santa Maria!” cried she, in astonishment, “what! is all that for me?”

“Yes,

"Yes, my dear Beatrice, and I hope that I shall have other opportunities of showing my sense of your attentions to me."

"Other opportunities! Ah, signora! what right have I to expect any thing for the little services in my power?—Heavenly Jesus! what generosity!"

"Come, say no more about it, Beatrice. I am now steady for you, so let us proceed upon our冒ade."

They immediately went down into the garden, which was of great extent, laid out with considerable taste, and watered by a limpid rivulet in two branches, that preserved an almost perpetual verdure. Small clumps of thickly-tufted trees, irregularly planted upon the borders of the stream, concealed under their verdant arches a variety of winding

paths, ornamented grottoes, statues of saints, and seats consecrated to repose. A multitude of vases, filled with flowers and exotic shrubs, were elegantly dispersed throughout the garden, to which artificial fountains and cascades added charms far beyond the powers of description. Two parallel walks, that connected the garden with the park, were planted with lime-trees, whose luxuriant and interwoven branches formed a bower impenetrable to the sun; and the park contained a wood, pierc'd in various directions, and watered by the rivulet that flowed with rapidity from the garden.

After Amelina had visited the garden, Beatrix conducted her through the avenue of lime-trees into the park. During their walk, Amelina inquired about the novice Rosalina, and was told that her

fever

fever had abated in the night, and that she had slept until Beatrix had left her.

"I am heartily glad of it," said Amelina, "for without knowing her, she has inspired me with a wonderful degree of interest, and even of attachment."

"I have something more to tell you," replied Beatrix. "You will make a new acquaintance this morning."

"A new acquaintance! Who can that be?"

"I will tell you directly," said Beatrix. "Yesterday, when I took my leave of you for the night, I waited upon the lady-abbess for her orders, and at that moment sister Perpetua, one of the lay-sisters, came to tell her that a lady desired to speak with her upon business of importance. As it was very late, the abbess seemed disinclined to receive her,

but sister Perpetua having persuaded her to do so, we followed donha Thereza to the parlour, and were present at the whole of the conversation. The lady, who is an inhabitant of Azeiro, of distinguished family, proposed to the abbess to receive into the convent a young person, who had accompanied her to the gate, and for whom she offered to be responsible. The young lady had been a novice in another community; but private reasons having determined her to renounce her noviciate, she had resolved to make her vows in our convent of Santa Maria. The abbess at first started some objections; but the lady having spoken to her in private, she no longer made any difficulties, and the young novice was directly introduced into the convent, and this morning you

are

are to breakfast with her in the apartments of the holy mother. In truth, sister Fidelia appeared to me to be not only almost as handsome as yourself, but even to be very like you in the face, though her features are much less delicate than yours; and she has nothing at all of your elegance and grace."

Amelina, who felt interested by the narrative of Beatrix, already formed the secret project of securing the friendship of Rosalina and Fidelia; and her heart seemed singularly to incline her more especially in favour of the latter.

Her guide now entered a path upon the left, and pointed out to Amelina the principal object of the excursion: it was a large island, watered by a variety of petty streams connected with the surrounding rivulet, whose banks were covered

vered with plane-trees, and across which was a wooden bridge of the most picturesque and characteristic figure and effect. When Amelina had traversed it, she perceived a marble porch, upon whose pediment was engraved, in large letters of gold, the word "*Solitude*," and below it was the following inscription:—

"Ye who visit the repositories of the dead, and whose whole study is to prepare yourselves for immortality, enter, and fear nothing: in this solitude you will find the calm and the melancholy of the tomb."

Astonished at these mournful words in so delightful a situation, Amelina applied to Beatrix for an explanation, and was informed that this enchanting solitude was the consecrated burial-ground of the nuns, whose graves she pointed out,

out, consisting only of a simple mound of earth, covered with green sod, and surmounted by a cross.

The island was intersected by a variety of narrow gravel walks, overshadowed by an infinity of cypresses, yews, and weeping willows, which also hung over the streams that watered their roots, and preserved a perpetual verdure in this solitary isle. In the centre of it arose a circular edifice, supported by twelve columns of white marble, and of the Corinthian order, that sustained a richly-sculptured cornice; and between each of the columns was a green trellis, to which were fastened lilacs, laburnums, jessamines, roses, honeysuckles, and other shrubs, whose flourishing and creeping branches arose far above the cornice, and

formed, as it were, a dome of verdure and of flowers.

The interior of the building consisted of a circular chapel, the walls of which were hung with black cloth, embroidered in silver with death's heads, bones, and other emblems of mortality; the pavement was of black and white mosaic, and a silver lamp, suspended from the ceiling, and perpetually burning, shed a melancholy light over this funeral and solitary chapel. Fronting the door was an altar, richly ornamented, upon which stood a statue of Santa Theresa; and in the centre of the chapel was a pedestal, bearing a sepulchral urn, with the various attributes of death, and the following extraordinary epitaph:—

"Here Claudia's happiness commenced;

enced; here her heart first became acquainted with love and with affliction; here, flying from the world and its terrible abyss, she expired, the victim of love and destiny. In this spot repose her ashes—this cold marble covers them for ever. Her fate was like that of the rose—short was the period of her bloom."

When Amelina had attentively contemplated all the objects that have been described, she quitted the chapel, inspired with a religious sort of terror, and inquired into the history of Claudia.

"I will tell you as we go along," answered Beatrix, "for it is time we should return, as you have promised to breakfast with the abbess."

"Let us return then immediately," said Amelina; and having crossed the

bridge, Beatrix began the following narrative:—

“ You must know that Claudia is the foundress of our convent, and that it occupies the site of a magnificent castle, to which also belonged the garden and the park. Claudia was the daughter of a nobleman of ancient family and distinguished rank, who always inhabited the castle; but he was so proud and hardhearted, that he would rather have killed his daughter than have allowed her to marry a man of inferior condition, and unfortunately Claudia was in love with a youth infinitely beneath her. Although she was thoroughly convinced that her father would never receive him as his son-in-law, she could not prevail upon herself to give him up, but met

him

him almost every evening in the island we have been visiting. No one entertained any doubts of Claudia's virtue, and her interviews with her lover were wholly unsuspected, when at length it pleased Heaven to suffer her father to surprise her. Furious at the discovery, he drew his sword, intending to plunge it into the breast of his offending daughter; but the young man, who was also armed, flew to her relief, and slew her father, at the very instant that he himself was mortally wounded. They both expired in the presence of Claudia, who, overwhelmed with grief, made a vow to consecrate her days to her Creator, and employed all her fortune in building the convent, and afterwards the chapel on the island, desiring to be buried in the spot where she had seen the dissolution

of every thing that was dear to her upon earth. As she became a nun entirely through despair, her despondency augmented in the cloister; day and night she wept, and seemed by her plaintive groans to be incessantly calling upon her father and her lover; but very soon her grief undermined her constitution, and when she was at the point of death, she caused herself to be conveyed to the chapel, where she expired in the midst of her entreaties that Heaven would pardon her inability to extinguish her fatal passion.

"Such, signora, is the history of Claudia, as I heard it from an ancient nun; but I believe that it happened a great number of years ago."

"Poor Claudia!" said the tender-hearted Amelina; "how much must thou

thou have suffered before the termination of thy misfortunes!—what sighs must thou have heaved in this spot where penitence has fixed her reign, and where every heart, freed from terrestrial affections, was probably insensible to the terrors and sorrows that oppressed thee! Deign, departed spirit, to accept the homage of a tear—it is sensibility that causes it to flow!"

Very soon after their return to the monastery, Amelina followed Beatrix to the apartments of the abbess, who, as she entered, advanced to meet her, affectionately embraced her, and, seating her by her side—"My dear child," said she, "I assure you that it is much against my inclination that I have until now deferred the pleasure of receiving you. Your aunt has recommended you to

to my attentions in the strongest terms ; but all recommendation was unnecessary.—it is enough to see you to be inspired with affection for you."

" Oh, indeed, nothing is more true," said a sweet but sonorous voice.

" You see," resumed the abbess, " that sister Fidelia is quite of my opinion."

Amelina, looking round, now perceived the novice, whom she had not before noticed.—" What thanks do I not owe to you, madam ?" said she to the abbess. " Would that you could read in my heart ! you would there see the sincere gratitude with which your kindness has inspired me.—And you, charming sister Fidelia—you who condescend to applaud the flattering expressions of our holy mother, be assured that I shall use all my endeavours to acquire and preserve

preserve your friendship; happy indeed shall I be if I succeed in my wishes to deserve it."

Fidelia received with blushes and confusion the compliments of the daughter of Leontio. That young novice was rather taller than Amelina; and, as Beatrix had observed, she bore some resemblance to our heroine; but Fidelia's hair and complexion were brown, and her face was less delicate than Amelina's; the sound of their voices also was different, but their accents alike penetrated the very soul, so replete were they with softness and sensibility.

"Come, my children," said the abbess, "here is the breakfast; you must not suffer it to grow cold."

- Amelina, whose walk had given her an appetite, did due honour to the breakfast,

fast,

fast, and when they had finished, the abbess proposed to Amelina and the novice to conduct them to sister Rosalina, to which they joyfully consented. They found that interesting novice in her bed; but debility seemed to be her principal complaint. After thanking the abbess for her attention, she inquired who were the strangers that accompanied her?

"They are," said the abbess, "the signora of Villa-Flora, and another young lady, who is determined to take the veil in our community."

Rosalina shewed evident marks of surprise; and fixing her eyes upon Amelina, and considering her attentively, a deep sigh escaped from her labouring bosom.

"My dear sister," said Amelina, addressing herself to the sick novice, "I
was

was yesterday witness of your distress, and was anxious to tell you how much I was affected by it."

Rosalina answered only by a sigh as heavy as the preceding.

"Are you in pain, sister Rosalina?" said the abbess.

"No, madam—I only feel a considerable degree of weakness; I am wholly destitute of strength. May I ask if the signora of Villa-Flora also designs to take the veil?"

"The veil!" said Angelina, hastily; "no—it is far from my intention to take the veil."

A smile of satisfaction appeared for an instant upon the lips of Rosalina. Seated near her bed, various thoughts seemed to agitate the minds of the company, and

and a profound silence prevailed for a few moments, which was broken by the abbess desiring Amelina to send for the harp she had brought with her to the convent. "It is an instrument," added she, "that always delights me and gives me the most pleasurable sensations. I hope you will favour me with playing upon it."

"Certainly, madam, if you wish it.—But I am afraid the music will disturb sister Rosalina."

"No, signora," said the invalid; "on the contrary, I shall have infinite satisfaction in listening to you."

"I know not what to play," said Amelina, when the harp arrived and she had tuned it.

"Whatever you please, my dear child," said

said the abbess; “though to say the truth, I had rather you would sing and accompany yourself.”

“With all my heart. Do you know,” continued Amelina, “the antique ballad of Inès de Castro? The neighbourhood of the spot where that bloody catastrophe happened seems to give it an additional degree of interest.”

“I am not unacquainted with the history of Inès; but though living in the centre of the province, I never remember to have heard the ballad you have mentioned; and if you sing it, it will have all the charms of novelty, notwithstanding its antiquity.”

Amelina’s overture upon the harp expressed consternation, terror, and the clattering of arms; her fingers passed rapidly over the chords, and by a sudden transition

transition pronounced the plaintive accents and lamentations of the most heartfelt grief: then, mixing the tones of her enchanting voice with the melodious sounds of the instrument, she sang with the most pathetic and ravishing expression the ballad of the unfortunate Inês de Castro*.

Whilst

The episode of Inês de Castro is one of the most interesting parts of the heroic poem of the Lusiad. Camoens never wrote any thing more tender or more affecting. Inês was secretly married to the infant don Pedro (eldest son of Alphonso, king of Portugal), by whom she had several children; but her enemies having irritated king Alphonso against her, she was cruelly and barbarously assassinated. When the infant succeeded to the crown, he ordered the body of his Inês to be taken out of her grave, and having placed her upon the throne, he caused her to be crowned queen, and swore that she had been his lawful wife. Pedro seems to have carried too far the vengeance that he inflicted upon

Whilst Amelina was occupied with her harp, the abbess and Fidelia had their

upon those who had assassinated the woman he had adored. Upon his accession to the crown, the murderers having fled into the territories of Peter the Cruel, King of Castile, he gave them up by virtue of a secret treaty; but one of them, called Diego, escaped by flight the punishment that had been destined for him. The two others, Alvarez and Coello, were conducted into Portugal, where Pedro was so much affected by the sight of them, that he violently struck the latter with a whip over his face. They were executed under the windows of the palace, and their hearts torn out in the presence of Pedro, who seemed to delight in contemplating the spectacle. It was not in the power of time to dissipate the impression made by the unfortunate death of Inés upon the mind of Pedro, who preserved to his last moments a gloomy and melancholy temper, which contributed to the excessive severity that procured him the surname of "The Justiciary." In the garden of an ancient palace near Mondigo, is still seen "The Fountain of Love," which Camoëns poetically supposes to have been occasioned by the tears of the nymphs of the neighbouring stream; and it is a popular

their eyes incessantly fixed upon her; but when she had finished, and approached the bed of Rosalina, she uttered a loud scream, upon perceiving that the novice was stretched out entirely without signs of animation.

As soon as the abbess was aware of the dangerous situation of Rosalina, she hurried out of the apartment, and returned with several of the nuns. They were followed by the mother Santa Theela,

spular tradition that this was the rendezvous of Pedro and Inès.—See Mickle's elegant Translation of the Lusiad.

Camoens, author of the poem, was both a gallant soldier and an incomparable poet; but his fate was that of most of those who follow either of those professions—he died in great poverty. The inscription upon his tombstone proves the truth of the assertion: “Here lies Louis Camoens, the Prince of Poets in his time: he lived and died indigent and unfortunate.” A.

Theela, who, ordering the apartment to be cleared, administered some cordials to Rosalina, and being acquainted with the nature of the accident, declared that it must have arisen from a very violent emotion in her mind; after which she hastened to the dispensary in search of the necessary medicines.

Rosalina's swoon was not attended by any bad consequences; her agitation was quieted by an anodyne drink, given her by the mother Santa Theela: her recovery was promoted by the great attentions paid to her by every one in the convent; and at the end of a few days she was able to go out and fulfil her customary duties; but as her health was far from re-established, she entreated the abbess to let her continue her novitiate a few months longer, that she might regain

again sufficient strength to prevent a relapse at the time of her assuming the veil.

The abbess was not much pleased at this request: after the conversation to which Rosalina's illness at such a particular moment had given rise, the delay might occasion various suspicions — it might be thought that the novice was a victim, whose sacrifice was wrapped in mystery, and even the probity and virtues of the abbess might be called in question. But as it was not in her power to compel Rosalina to hasten the fatal moment, she not only acceded to the request, but even concealed from her the displeasure it had occasioned.

As Amelina was not subject to all the rules of the community, she had contracted a habit of walking in the garden every

every evening after supper, as often as the weather permitted. There, quiet and alone, her thoughts turned upon her aunt, and upon the circumstances that had caused their separation.

—“It is very certain,” said she to herself, “that I shall never behold donna Lucia any more; the obscure phrases in her letter but too forcibly announce the extent of my misfortune. Thus then, abandoned to my fate, I find myself shut up in a convent, and have no prospect of the termination of my captivity. I am determined, however, not to pass the whole of my youth in confinement, and if I hear nothing from my aunt at the end of a year, I will quit the monastery and endeavour to discover her at Lisbon.”

In this manner the daughter of Leon-

tio sought to beguile the ennui that assailed her, notwithstanding the caresses of the abbess, who strove on all occasions to give her the greatest proofs of her affection. If she could have seen the novice Fidelia as often as she desired, she would scarcely have felt the loss of her liberty; but she could only be with her at certain hours, and even then she was restrained by Rosalina, who seemed to be particularly attentive to her actions. Although Amelina professed great friendship for the elder novice, her regard for Fidelia was infinitely warmer and more affectionate: the former was of an age so disproportioned to Amelina's, that it was not likely for a confidential intimacy to subsist between them; but every circumstance appeared to unite her more closely to Fidelia—their ages, their accomplish-

complishments, their dispositions, and a thousand undescribable little nothings, contributed more firmly to cement their mutual attachment.

The perseverance with which sister Rosalina seemed to pursue her design of never leaving Amelina alone with the young novice at length displeased our heroine so much, that she could not help testifying it by a striking alteration in her manner; but Rosalina still followed her with assiduity, and, without appearing to observe that she was no longer received with cordiality, continued to load Amelina with every mark of tenderness and affection.

END OF VOL. I.

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THE
CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

A TALE.

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THE
CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

A Portuguese Tale,

**FROM A MANUSCRIPT LATELY FOUND BY A BRITISH OFFICER
OF RANK IN AN OLD MANSION IN PORTUGAL.**

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Not e'en the soldier's fury, rais'd in war,
The rage of tyrants, when defiance stings 'em,
The pride of priests, so bloody when in power,
Are half so dreadful as a woman's vengeance.

SAVAGE.

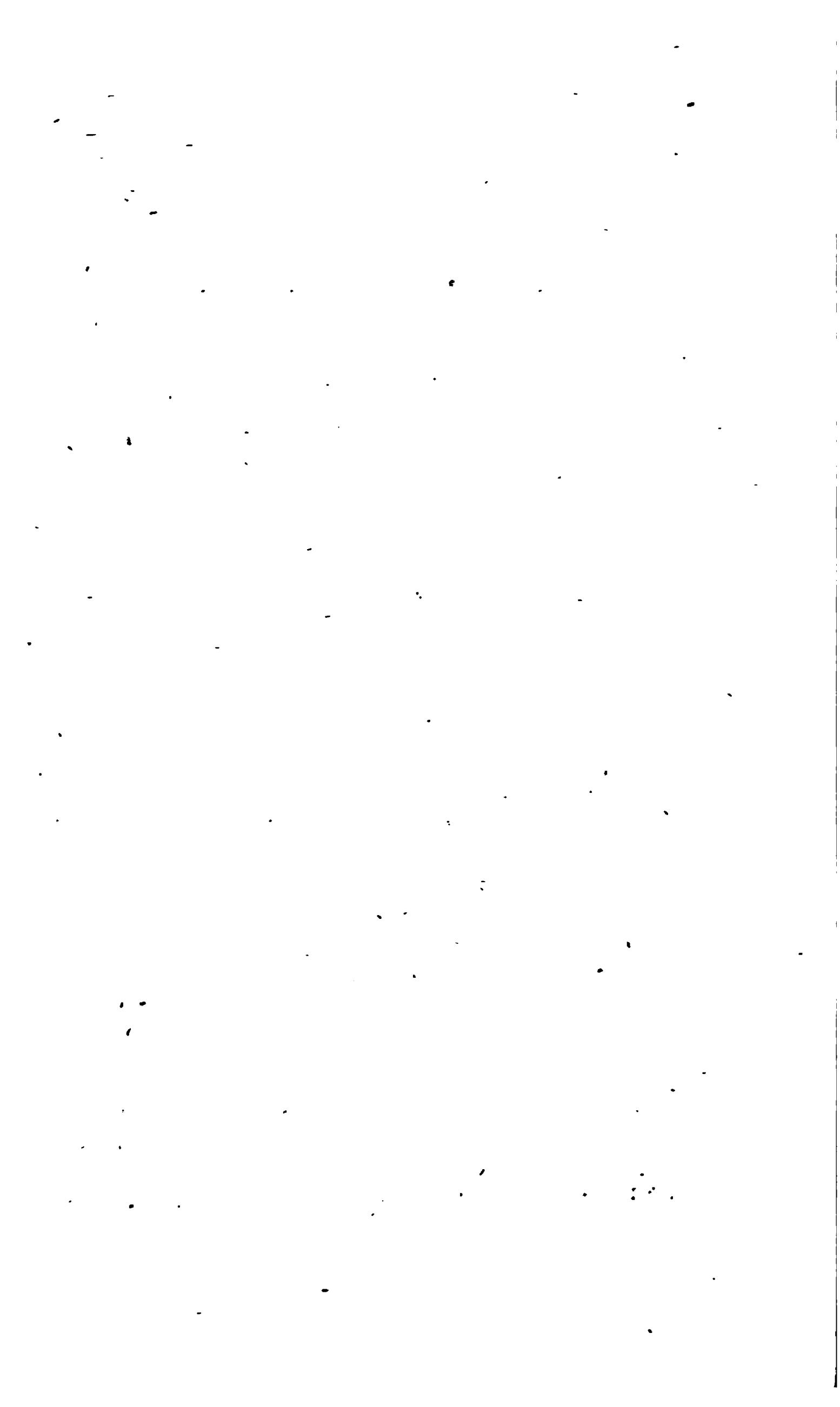
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THE

Castle of Villa-Flora.

CHAPTER I.

AMELINA had been two months an inhabitant of the convent, when one evening, during her walk, she was so occupied with reflecting upon the singularity of her situation, that she reached the Solitude without perceiving that she had wandered to such a distance, and was apprised of it only by the reflection of the moon upon the waters by which

the island was surrounded. She remained for some time undecided whether she should enter it: the coolness and serenity of the night strongly invited her to visit the sequestered paths, but a sort of involuntary terror at the idea of seeing so many graves deterred her for an instant, until reflection convincing her of the absurdity of the sensation, she crossed the bridge, and shortly after arrived at the chapel, the door of which she found half open.

Her surprise was greatly excited upon observing one of the marble panels of the altar taken out, and thrown on one side; but curiosity succeeding to astonishment, she unhooked the lamp, and cautiously proceeding to the aperture, discovered several winding steps, that appeared to conduct to a great depth.

Encouraged

Encouraged rather than alarmed, Amelina immediately descended the staircase, and at the bottom of sixty steps, found herself in a cavern, divided into three parts, each of them, as she supposed, of an immense extent.

Whilst she considered with amazement these gloomy and immeasurable vaults, she concluded that they must necessarily be known to the abbess, as well as to many of the nuns; but she was at a loss to conjecture to what use they could be applied, and fearing to be surprised in these melancholy regions, she resolved to quit them without delay, and carefully to examine the entrance, with the view of returning when she might be without apprehension of discovery.

Having reached the chapel, she at-

tentively inspected the panel, which she found was a board, thinly coated with marble, so light as to be removable at pleasure, and that, by means of a concealed spring, the panel fitted so exactly into the altar, that the secret could scarcely be detected, even by the most suspicious and scrutinizing eye.

As Amelina was hanging up the lamp, she thought she heard the sound of voices in the cavern, and listening at the aperture, clearly distinguished the murmur of words, mixed with the noise of steps, that could be at no great distance, since they already resounded upon the staircase.

Amelina waited no longer in the chapel, but hurried away with the swiftness of a deer, until she reached the garden, where

where she slackened her pace, but stopped not until she was safely arrived within her cell.

This adventure, which she did not communicate even to Fidelia, having alarmed her as to the security of her nocturnal rambles, she employed her evenings in reading, and in perfecting the talents she possessed.

The abbess had constructed for her private devotions a magnificent little chapel, which was sumptuously ornamented, and wanted only a picture over the altar; and she was much embarrassed to find one that would answer her intentions. The chapel being dedicated to the Virgin, it seemed necessary that the picture should represent one of the remarkable events in the life of the Mo-

6 CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

ther of Jesus, and that the subject should be executed by a skilful artist.

As the abbess was one day expressing her regret, in the presence of Fidelia and Amelina, the young novice suddenly offered to undertake the picture she desired.

"What!" cried both the abbess and Amelina, "do you know then how to paint?"

"Yes, holy mother," said Fidelia, with modesty.

"And you have hitherto left me in ignorance of your talents?" said Amelina.

"My dear friend, no opportunity ever yet presented itself for my speaking of them; and, besides, I have so little merit—"

"I am

"I am convinced of the contrary," said the abbess, "and I gladly accept your proposition. In truth, the idea is delightful to me. I did not indeed expect to be so agreeably surprised. You have only to write down what you require to be purchased for the occasion, and tomorrow I will send for the canvas, colours, brushes, and whatever you may want. But, in the mean time, we must think of the subject to be represented in the picture: what do you imagine would succeed best?"

"It seems to me, madam, that the Annunciation would be particularly suitable."

"You are right, my child—your idea is an admirable one; and if you would wish to give additional charms to your performance, and add to the value I shall

8 CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORE.

set upon it, you must appear in it as Gabriel the archangel ; assuredly he had not more heavenly features than your own."

Fidelia blushed as she received the compliment, and the abbess proceeded—“ As to those of the Virgin, I leave them entirely to your selection.” But, in saying this, she looked at the novice, in a manner that seemed to say—“ You cannot but honour me with the choice.”

As quick, however, as thought itself, Fidelia exclaimed—“ Ah, my charming Amelina, my decision is made the moment that I behold you ! Can any contend with you for the palm of beauty ?”

“ Amelina !” said the abbess, with a countenance that testified her disappointed, “ Amelina !—yes, yes, indeed—you are right, my dear Fidelia.”

The

The flattering homage of the novice was particularly gratifying to Amelina; but not suffering her satisfaction to display itself, she desired that she might yield the honour to the abbess, who coolly answered, that she would undoubtedly make a much better figure in the character of the Virgin than herself.

Every thing requisite for the picture being conveyed from Aveiro to the convent, Fidela began her labours, and requested that she might have no other witnesses of her progress than her young friend and Rosalina; but she applied to it so closely and so zealously, that she had soon the pleasure of announcing the completion of her enterprise.

Upon the day fixed for the inauguration of the picture, the nuns crowded into the chapel, where it was placed over

the altar, and concealed by a green curtain, which was withdrawn upon a signal being given by the abbess, when an involuntary burst of surprise and admiration arose in that religious assembly, and was succeeded by a silence equally expressive of their thoughts.

The picture was indeed worthy of the applause even of a decided cognoscente; it was impossible for any thing to be softer, more delicate, or more natural: the enchanting figure of Amelina seemed to breathe upon the canvas; her eyes beamed with astonishment and humility; her cheeks wore the tender colouring of modesty, and the virgin graces were scattered over every part of her deportment. It was difficult to decide whether Gabriel or Mary possessed the most numerous attractions—if the Virgin was celestial,

CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA, At

celestial, the archangel was almost divine; his features, radiant with ethereal love, seemed to exhale it as the rose sends forth its perfume; a heavenly smile sat upon his vermillion lips, and persuasion appeared to dwell upon his countenance; his aerial form announced the messenger and favourite of the divinity; his body, perfect as that of the Apollo Belvedere, was partly concealed by a drapery, so light that it looked as if it had been weaved by the gentle breath of Zephyrus; and the brilliant whiteness of his skin, his expressive eyes, and auburn locks, flowing in graceful ringlets around his shoulders, composed an incomparable model of perfection. It was not possible to imagine that such a being existed upon earth; and yet, upon looking at Fidelia, the figure represented upon

16 CASTLE OF VILLA-PIOMA.

the canvas appeared embodied in her person.

It is not difficult to imagine the tribute of praise bestowed upon the novice by the astonished and enraptured nuns; and the abbess herself, notwithstanding her vexation at seeing the Virgin represented with features different from her own, could not help proclaiming her marked approbation of the picture, at the same time that she offered her warmest thanks to the ingenuous and interesting artist. The frame was surrounded with garlands and festoons of flowers, and the day was consecrated as a festival in the community.

Ten months elapsed without any tidings from donna Lucia, and during this interval Amelia's anxiety redoubled. She would willingly have sought for consolation

solation by communicating her sorrows to Fidelia, but, always watched by Rosalina, whose constant presence became more and more irksome to her, she had not even the melancholy pleasure of depositing her regrets in the affectionate bosom of her friend.

Living with Fidelia in habits of the strictest intimacy, neither of them had as yet mentioned to the other any part of the particular circumstances that related to them. Each sought the other incessantly—each appeared desirous of breaking silence; but whether they were restrained by Rosalina, or whether they were withholden by timidity, neither of them had made any advances in that confidence which seemed so necessary to the happiness of both.

The daughter of Leontio found no pleasure

pleasure in her uniform and unvaried mode of life; her lively and active imagination could not long remain subject to such apathy; she daily formed design upon design, and heaped project upon project. All her thoughts turned upon her departure from the monastery; and as she felt infinite repugnance at the idea of abandoning her friend, she saw no other method of obviating the difficulty than that of inducing her to accompany her.

This plan was admirably combined in her imagination, and all that seemed wanting for its completion was the concurrence of Fidelia, which she did not despair of gaining, as that novice did not appear to entertain a very decided taste for the monastic life.

Whilst Fidelia was employed upon
the

the picture of the Annunciation, she enjoyed a much greater degree of liberty than the nuns ; and when it was finished, no attempt being made to restrain her, she continued to taste the sweets of that freedom which her talents had so unexpectedly procured her.

Although the rigours of winter are seldom felt in Portugal, the spring is always expected and received with delight, and its mild influence is not less forcibly felt by nature and by every susceptible heart.

It was at this charming season of the year that Amelina resolved to submit her projects to the judgment of Fidelia ; and having strengthened herself in her determination to hide no part of her history from her friend, she one morning left her cell with an intention of revealing

ing to her every secret and sentiment of her heart.

Having repeatedly knocked at Fidelia's door, without receiving any answer, she returned towards her cell, disappointed at being under the necessity of postponing her designs.

She was at no great distance from her chamber, when she was suddenly struck with sounds that evidently proceeded from her harp. Attentively listening, she waited with impatience until the termination of the overture, when a voice full of melody and expression was heard to mingle with the chords of the instrument, and she instantly recollect ed it to be Fidelia's.

The words seemed to be addressed to a variety of flowers, the names of which were clearly distinguished by Amelina, and

and she heard the rose more especially apostrophized, and denominated the sovereign of flowers. Fidelia had never before displayed any knowledge of music, and yet she sang and accompanied herself with such precision and taste as evinced her great proficiency in that science.

Amelina at first felt inclined suddenly to enter, and reproach her friend with dissimulation; but the fear of displeasing her operating upon her mind, she withdrew into the garden, until she thought her cell was left at liberty by Fidelia.

The first object that presented itself to view, on entering her chamber, was an elegant basket of lilies, jonquils, violets, myrtle, and carnations, over which sowered, upon a mossy stem, a beautiful rose,

rose, that might justly pretend to the title of queen of the empire of Flora. Near the basket lay a paper, containing the very words that Amelina had heard the novice singing to the harp, and in which the rose was made to say, that if it might be permitted to repose on the bosom of Amelina, the writer should consider it as the faithful token of happiness and affection.

The arrangement of the flowers, and the expressions in the words of the song, at first astonished our young orphan, who could form no idea of Fidelia's intention in making her this extraordinary present. She at length considered it as a mark of tender playfulness, such as was authorized by their intimacy ; but resolved that it should not be made known

known to the abbess, whose austere disposition by no means sympathized with such amusements.

Whilst, however, she embraced the resolution of remaining silent on the subject, she felt desirous to gratify her friend, and placing the rose in her bosom, went down to dinner, with the hope of enlivening the countenance of Fidelia; but, to the surprise of Amelina, she not only perceived no emotion that could be deemed susceptible of interpretation, but remarked that on that day the young novice seemed as anxious to avoid her as she was usually eager to accompany her.

Amelina was agitated during the night by a succession of dreams, each one more alarming than the other: sometimes she fancied she was wandering in a vast cemetery, amongst a heap of bones and broken

broken coffins ; and sometimes she was walking in a beautiful meadow, under shady trees, where every thing breathed tranquillity and happiness, and where a charming youth addressed her with the most passionate expressions of love ; but whilst she received his declaration with delight, she found herself again transported to the burial-ground ; rivers of blood flowed around her, a consuming fire broke forth from the bowels of the earth, and the noise of thunder mingled its redoubled explosions with a confused sound of plaintive groans and terrifying shrieks. These frightful illusions engraved themselves deeply in her mind. She awoke without being refreshed, and endeavoured to dissipate her gloomy thoughts by an excursion into the park ; but all nature seemed in harmony with

her

her melancholy; the sky was dark and heavy, the wind sighed through the avenues, and every thing announced that the day would not pass without a storm.

Whilst Amelina was in the evening reflecting upon events so ill calculated to enliven her, the convent-bell tolled for vespers, and she resolved to repair to church, and endeavour to have an interview with Fidelia. Placing herself near her friend, she was astonished at the absence of the abbess, who, for the first time since her elevation to that dignity, had omitted being present at that particular part of the service. When vespers were terminated, the nuns hastily left the church, to inquire if the absence of their chief had been caused by indisposition? but Amelina and Fidelia remained

mained in the choir, as if for the purpose of prolonging their devotions, though in fact with very different intentions. The majestic obscurity of that holy place was increased by the rapid approaches of the night; the rain beat hard upon the roof, the thunder was heard to grumble at a distance, and the lightning, flashing through the painted windows, spread a terrifying sort of glare, that was succeeded by darkness still more impressive and alarming.

“Good God!” cried Amelina, “what a dreadful storm! My dear Fidelia, are you not afraid?”

“Would to Heaven,” replied the novice, with a sigh, “that I had no other fear but that!—my heart would not then be so cruelly tormented——”

She was here interrupted by Beatrix,
who

‘who retired, after lighting two large wax tapers, that were to burn during the night before the altar.

“ Fidelia,” resumed the daughter of Leontio, “ I have much to tell you.”

“ And I also—I have much to say,” answered Fidelia, in a low voice: “ yes, if I have resolution enough to make my confession to you, you will hear a secret ——But how shall I ever prevail upon myself to disclose it? How can I—— But, alas! it must be done; and though you should afterwards hate me as much as you hitherto have loved me, I will tell you all—you shall know every thing concerning me.”

“ What does all this mean? Why should I hate you—I, whom you never have offended? Do you fancy that I am displeased by the flowers and the

note

note you left in my cell? Be assured, I am far from being so; and all I wish is, that you had not so long concealed your talents."

"Virtuous Amelina! your pure heart suspects not—But when you shall become acquainted with my crime—when you shall know——Ah! I feel that I shall not survive it. I already experience——Oh God! my God! have compassion on me!"

The afflicted novice fell lifeless at the feet of the alarmed and astonished Amelina; she was embarrassed what means to adopt to succour her fainting friend. To traverse the cloisters in search of assistance would prolong the danger of Fidelia, and occasion an unpleasant discussion in the convent; Amelina, therefore, taking one of the wax tapers that had

had been lighted by Beatrix, ran and fetched some holy water that stood in a jug behind the altar, and having sprinkled some drops over Fidelia, without producing the effect she had expected, she hastily opened the upper part of her garments, and in withdrawing what she thought might contribute to the prolongation of the fit, she was amazed at perceiving that Fidelia's bosom was destitute of those enchanting beauties that compose one of the principal ornaments bestowed by nature upon the sex; but her amazement increased on feeling around her friend's chin a thick down, that had been concealed by the headdress peculiar to her destination as a novice. All these circumstances proclaimed, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the person whom she had considered as devoted to

a monastic life was of a sex different from her own ; she however continued to afford all the attentions in her power, and Fidelia recovering her senses, and remarking the embarrassment of Amelina, hastily arose, with an intention of explaining the extraordinary discovery that had taken place.

" Forgive me—forgive one whose offence will be too severely punished if you load him with the weight of your displeasure ! It is now useless to have any further recourse to concealment. Yes, Amelina—yes, I am, as you have perceived, a young man. If 't were a crime, I confess that I am criminal, for love alone suggested to me the design of introducing myself to you under this garb of penitence. Deign to hear me, Amelina—condescend to listen to my

my justification, and you will find that I am less culpable than imprudent. That alone is, I confess, sufficient to displease you; but if this heart, which adores you, has hitherto preserved its purity—if it be still worthy of your regard, tell me, Amelina, will you not allow me to entertain a hope?"

"Unhappy youth!" answered Amelina, "I consent to listen to your pretended justification: but take care—tremble to add an odious falsehood to your crimes! Think not to alarm or to impinge upon me. You say it is love that has induced you to violate these holy walls, which even the most impious respect, and dare not to profane. But how could I possibly inspire you with so violent a passion, since, before I came to

Santa Maria, we had never even beheld each other?"

"Amelina, think not so meanly of me as to suppose that I should stoop to the concealment of the truth—think not that I would deceive her to whom I have devoted my existence.—Great God! I should look upon myself as a monster, were I capable of even for a moment conceiving the idea! Alas! during those happy times, whose short duration I now have to regret, when you loaded me with the most affectionate appellations, did you ever remark in the features of your friend any expression that denoted the possibility of such meanness, of such treachery? No—I am persuaded that in your heart you do justice to my character. Recall to mind, my

my Amelina, the day that preceded your departure from Villa-Flora—recollect the melancholy history of Leontio and Clementia, which donna Lucia related to you upon the banks of a torrent—and, above all, forget not the two strangers who occasioned your flight, and who, in the course of the same day, again presented themselves to your view. If these incidents are not effaced from your memory, you will easily believe that my passion for you dates from the day that I have mentioned to you; and I will now give you a concise account of what concerns me, and acquaint you with the methods I employed to gain admittance into the monastery."

Interested by this declaration, and attracted by an indescribable sensation, far more acute than curiosity, the daughter

ter of Leontio calmed her irritated feelings, and promised to listen with attention to the narrative of the pretended novice.

" My name," said the young stranger, " is Florello ; I am a Spaniard, of noble birth, and only child of the count de Lemos, one of the grandees of that kingdom. My earliest years were passed in my paternal house at Madrid, where I received such an education as is usually bestowed upon the son and heir of a man of quality. Edmund, marquis of Vellanes, of the kingdom of Portugal, my near relation, was educated with me, his mother, who was my father's sister, and now lives at Aveiro with her son, having requested her brother to take charge of him, which he readily acquiesced in, without ever making any difference between

tween us. Our studies were completed about eighteen months since, when my father being appointed by his Catholic majesty to execute a commission of importance in Peru, I was extremely desirous of accompanying him : but he refused to accede to my request; and sending me to Aveiro with my cousin, ordered me to remain at my aunt's during his absence from Spain, of the length of which he was unable to form any idea.

" My aunt received me with all the kindness of one who considered me as her near relative, and the friend of her son. Her goodness and complaisance were almost boundless ; she loaded me with caresses, and seemed to study the anticipation of my wishes. The mother of whom I had been deprived in my

infancy could not have cherished me with more tenderness, or been beloved in return with more sincerity; and under her auspices, the friendship early contracted between Edmund and myself was so firmly cemented, that nothing but death itself can ever diminish or dissolve it.

“ I had passed several months at Aveiro, when I accidentally heard such a ravishing account of the young señora of Villa-Flora, that I instantly conceived the most ardent desire of ascertaining whether the description had not been too highly coloured; and upon mentioning my project to Edmund, and desiring him to accompany me, he the more willingly assented, as he had also an earnest wish to be satisfied as to the truth of the report that bestowed such charms upon

the

the niece of donna Lucia. Being assured that no stranger was ever admitted into the Castle of Villa-Flora, and that all our efforts to that purport would be fruitless, we determined upon concealing ourselves in the neighbourhood, and imagined that we could not fail of meeting the inhabitants of the Castle during their walks around the territories.

“Leaving Aveiro one morning before sunrise, we soon reached Villa-Flora, and had wandered around the Castle near an hour, when, by an unlooked-for piece of good fortune, I perceived in the avenue a lady, whom, by the description that had been given me of her, I knew to be donna Lucia, followed by a young person—Heavens! how beautiful she appeared!—She was one of the graces—the sister of love—or rather, it was you—it was

Annelina! Observing you ascend the hill opposite the Castle, we followed you with caution, until we saw you seated near a torrent, and then concealing ourselves behind some bushes, we there considered you with attention, and I there became intoxicated with love. - From that moment, Annelina, you became the sovereign of my thoughts, and I vowed to adore you until my latest breath. I know not by what inconsiderate movement we were discovered, but Edmund seizing my arm, conducted me to a distance, and was desirous of immediately returning to Aveiro: but I resolved on seeing you once more, and, notwithstanding his remonstrances, proceeded towards the Castle, where my hopes were soon after gratified; for upon hearing you sing, I clapped my hands by way

way of applause, which drew you to the window of a belfry that commanded the walls of the Castle. In the delirium of the moment, I should certainly have prostrated myself before you, if Edmund had not dragged me into the forest, and insisted on our repairing to Aveiro.

"Edmund was already acquainted with the violence of my passion, which I hastened also to communicate to his mother, beseeching her to favour its success; and as she not only felt delighted to oblige me, but was flattered by my confidence, and charmed with the prospect of such an alliance, she promised to write instantly to donna Lucia, and propose me as the husband of her niece.—'If,' added she, 'the offer should be accepted, I will take upon me to

conclude the marriage, notwithstanding your youth and the absence of your father.'

" My aunt having been invited to the convent of Santa Maria, where a novice was to take the veil the day following, she desired us to accompany her thither, and we were seated in a grated gallery, from whence we could easily witness the whole ceremony. Judge, Amelina, of my joy when I perceived you amongst the company in the church. With a beating heart I quitted the gallery, intending to approach, and even to accost you ; but the crowd was so great that it never was in my power to get near you. Upon leaving the church, I happened to address some questions to an old man, whom I soon discovered to be a servant at Villa-Flora : from him I learned that
you

you were that day to become an inhabitant of the convent—that donna Lucia had left the Castle the preceding morning, as he supposed for Lisbon, and that you would probably continue many years in the monastery. Terrified at this intelligence, I returned, pale and breathless, to the gallery, where Edmund and my aunt, alarmed at my appearance, inquired into the cause of my consternation; but I deferred mentioning my fears until we had quitted the church, and were already on the road to Aveiro.

‘ You must not despair, my dear Flortello,’ said my aunt. ‘ It may not perhaps be difficult to release the young signora from the confinement to which she seems to be condemned.’

‘ Certainly there are methods of liberating

rating her,' answered I, ' and if you consent to it, I have thought of one, the success of which I can rely upon, though at the same time I ought to confess that the slightest suspicion, the smallest indiscretion, would inevitably be the ruin of us all.'

' Tell me directly what it is,' replied my aunt, ' and be assured that no apprehensions shall restrain me, if I find it in any degree practicable.'

' My plan,' I said, ' is to assume the dress of a novice; my shape is not ill calculated for female attire, and my almost beardless chin will not betray me. You must conduct me in my disguise to Santa Maria--relate a plausible story to the abbess--persuade her to receive me into the monastery, and I will answer for the rest. If I am happy enough to gain

gain the love of Amelina, she will without hesitation consent to leave the convent with me ; and if I should fail of ingratiating myself with her, I will quit the monastery, full of grief and despair, but not without the satisfaction of having tried every method of acquiring her esteem. I foresee that my project will require a considerable length of time ; but that is of no consequence, if I succeed. I shall behave myself so as to occasion no suspicions, and I shall take care, by irresistible arguments, to engage one of the lay-sisters to aid me in carrying on a correspondence with Edmund, by which you will both be informed of my proceedings.'

"My aunt opposed my scheme too feebly not to be induced easily to adopt it ; and the necessary preparations being made,

made, on our arrival at Aveiro, she conducted me hither, and without difficulty prevailed on the abbess to receive me.

" Now, Amelina, you are acquainted with my history; you know also, that during ten months my respect for you has never ceased or diminished for an instant, and that I have never uttered a single word that could displease you. The first time that I was introduced to you, you testified a flattering degree of friendship for me; and, under the sacred name of friend, I enjoyed in silence the satisfaction of seeing you, of hearing you, and of talking to you—and my heart desired no other happiness. An unconquerable timidity—sure testimony of a passion sincere and virtuous as mine—has hitherto restrained me from making a confession that has been an hundred

hundred times on the point of escaping me; and my secret would still be confined within my bosom, if the abbess had not ordered me to prepare immediately for the veil. My beloved Amelina! let me conjure you not to reject the ardent vows of an admirer, who has exposed himself to every danger, in hopes of gaining your affections. But, if I should be unfortunate enough not to prevail upon you to share my passion, at least let me hope that you will neither disesteem nor betray me."

Florello pronounced these words with such emotion, that Amelina, whose heart admired his declarations and approved his love, was almost ready to throw herself into his arms. Desirous, however, of proving him still farther, she affected

to

to be extremely displeased with his conduct ; and treating him as a vile seducer, she pretended to give no credit to what he had been telling her.—“ You have materially deceived me,” she said, “ and think not that I will permit you any longer to remain within these walls. If as you have asserted, I have any influence upon your mind, you will leave the convent to-morrow morning ; it is the last time that I will use my authority—but you must absolutely quit the monastery to-morrow ! ”

“ You order me then to fly from you, Ameline ! You recompense my sincere, my unfeigned passion, by forcing me to quit you—by compelling me to leave behind the every thing I held dear and cherish in the world ! No, Ameline ; no ! ”

no!—your heart is too good, too full of sensibility, to have conceived so cruel a design."

"But of what do you complain, signor? Ought you not to feel happy that I promise to forget your offence, whilst it is in my power to revenge myself? It is now not difficult to find a pretence for justifying your departure in the opinion of the abbess; but if you persist in your intention of remaining here against my inclinations, I warn you that——"

"No!" interrupted Florello, in the accents of despair, "no! I will not quit the convent!—and since you desire that I should die, I had rather expire in your presence than elsewhere. May you never reproach yourself with the death of a person who adores you! This is the last, the sole wish of my heart." Then drawing

drawing a poniard from beneath his garments, and vehemently lifting up his arm, he pointed the fatal steel at his bosom, that had continued uncovered during the discourse.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the daughter of Leontio, seizing his hand, "what are you about to do? Calm this outrageous passion, and swear to me not to make an attempt upon your life. Can you believe that I am insensible to the sacrifices you have made for the love of me? Ah, Florello! confide in my heart: if I have appeared so for one moment, it was only because I was anxious to be convinced——"

"What do I hear?" cried Florello, letting fall the dagger on the ground, and throwing himself at the feet of Amelina. "Angel of consolation! since your heavenly

heavenly voice forbids me to die; it is doubtless that I may consecrate to you my whole existence. But terminate your work, and tell me that I am not hateful to you—tell me that you will one day love me, or rather tell me that you love me now! Delay not, I beseech, that instant of my happiness!"

The persuasive voice of Florello, his expressive looks, his supplianting posture, united in deciding Amelina, who, no longer able to restrain her feelings, gave her hand to her admirer—"Yes," said she, in trembling accents, "I do love you—I seek no longer to conceal it; nor can I resist the pleasure of confessing the sentiments with which you have inspired me. Forgive the little artifice by which I wished to be convinced of the sincerity of your regard; my heart disavowed

disavowed it at the very instant that I practised it."

"Oh, happiness! oh, delightful enjoyment!" said Florello, pressing Amelina to his bosom; "this enchanting moment has more than rewarded all my sufferings. My friend! my amiable friend! can you conceive the excess of my felicity?...Can you——"

But he suddenly checked himself, on hearing some one walking in the church. It was Rosalina, who, under pretense of being uneasy about Amelina, had come shivering in search of her...."My dear friend," she said, "I beg of you to remain here no longer—it is already very late."

"It is true, sister," said Amelina, rather peevishly. "Let us go directly to our cells."

"And

"And you, Fidelia?" said Rosaline,
"will you accompany us?"

"No, sister---I have not finished my devotions," replied Florelle, coldly, but at the same time casting a look of tenderness at Amelina, expressive of his extreme regret at her departure.—"Is it then true," said he, when they had left the church, "that she has not only permitted me to love her, but has told me I was not indifferent to her? It is not then a fancy of the mind; but I have tasted but allots fulliest the sweetness of this avowal? Heavenly creature! fear not that I should abuse thy amiable countenance! I swear, by everything that is most sacred, and by the pure love that I cherish for you, that thy innocence shall be faithfully respected by me!—and when Hymen shall unite us in his holy bands,

you

you shall have the satisfaction of saying that the lover your heart had chosen had conducted himself with honour—that he was worthy of you, and worthy of the appellation of your husband."

Yielding to a thousand succeeding reflections of the most seducing nature, Florello fell into a profound sleep in the stall in which he was sitting, and was not disturbed by the closing of the church-doors. But a terrifying dream interrupted the tranquillity of his slumbers. He fancied himself conveyed into a dark and spacious cavern, where, after he had walked some time, he saw at a distance a feeble glimmering, towards which he directed his steps, and found that it proceeded from a sepulchral lamp suspended from the roof. By the faint light which it cast upon this melancholy spot,

spot, he perceived a tomb composed of rough stones, covered with a mouldy green, and that the walls of the vault shone with a viscous sort of slime, usually produced by moisture in such places. The cavern was divided into various galleries, whose length seemed impenetrable to the sight, but all terminating at the tomb, which appeared to serve as a central point. Upon examining this monument of evil fortune, Florello thought he distinguished some letters engraved upon it; but they were so rudely cut that he never could decipher them, and he fancied they belonged to a language of which he was ignorant. Whilst he was attentively considering them, he heard the sound of steps re-echo through a gallery, and presently saw a woman advancing precipitately towards

him : but what was his emotion on finding her to be his intended wife—his Amelina ! She wore the same dress in which he had so lately seen her ; he particularly remarked the long blue gown, that lightly marked the outlines of her bosom, and gracefully described the symmetry of her form. Her head was decorated with a garland of roses, and with a long veil, as white as snow, that flowed elegantly down her shoulders, and almost touched the ground—“ Dearest Florello,” she said, with a smile of virgin modesty, “ the moment is arrived when I can recompense thy constancy. Follow me ; the altar is ready—let us go and be united for life.”

Florello, now attempting to advance towards Amelina, felt himself restrained by a supernatural power—he was incapable

able of moving from the place; and whilst he in vain exerted himself to escape, a violent wind arose—the lamp was extinguished, and the earth trembled. Suddenly the tomb opened, and amidst clouds of smoke and sulphurous flames, sent forth a hideous phantom wrapped in a shroud, armed with a glittering sabre, and bearing upon its breast a label, on which were written, in characters of fire, the words—“*Irreligion, immorality, jealousy.*”

At the sight of this phantom, Amelina, with dreadful screams, threw herself into the arms of her lover: but the spectre followed her with uplifted sabre. Florelio, motionless, finds himself unable to defend her—she must inevitably perish! The horror of his situation is not

to be expressed.—Great God ! the blow is struck !—her blood already flows !

At this instant Florello awoke, overcome by grief and apprehension ; his blood was chilled in his veins, and he seemed to be almost bereaved of animation. Upon recovering himself, he cast his bewildered eyes upon the objects that surrounded him : his astonishment augmented on finding himself in the choir, and he could hardly persuade himself that his frightful dream was an illusion. At length he recalled to mind that he had not quitted the church with Amelina, and he calculated that it was probably past midnight. The conyent clock just then struck two : the obscurity of that holy spot, rendered still more impressive by the gloomy light of the tapers,

pers, the funereal sound of the clock, and the profound silence that succeeded its vibrations, all combined to increase the terror that his dream had imprinted upon his mind. With these disordered ideas he hastily rose up to fly, but in his agitation, instead of going to the door that led into the cloisters, he proceeded to that of the sacristy, which the lay-sister had negligently left open. He hurried through the long passages without finding his way out as he expected; but soon arriving in a chapel, lighted by a lamp, he perceived several men, with haggard countenances and emaciated forms, and as many women, in affliction, and in mourning garments, standing round a naked corpse, the object of their grief and lamentations. Florello observing them to be motion-

misfortune hovers over our heads, and will certainly burst upon us, unless we take speedy measures to avoid the coming storm. The abbess has just signified to me, in an imperious tone, that I must resolve upon taking the veil the very day that my novitiate shall expire, and that Rosalina would pronounce her vows at the same time. You will readily imagine, my Amelina, that I by no means affected to resist her orders, and that I positively assured her of my obedience, with which she appeared satisfied. You cannot think how much I mistrust that haughty woman; I am even convinced that her apparent austerity, and her exaggerated shew of virtue, do but cover a multitude of vices. Be that as it may, we must, at all events, leave the convent as soon as possible; for if

if the abbess should discover our intentions, she would inflict upon us the severest punishment she could invent. Monks and nuns have no pleasure equal to that of revenge. As it is necessary, therefore, my sweet friend, that we should have an interview for the purpose of concerting the plan of our escape, I beg of you to meet me at nine this evening, in the great walk leading to the Solitude. The urgent necessity of this meeting will strike you too much to require any further observations on its importance. Adieu, my Amelina! Think of the most faithful and passionate of lovers."

Amelina pressed the note against her heart, as the first pledge of affection.

She loved Florella far more than she permitted herself to acknowledge; but considering that birth, fortune, and every other circumstance, seemed in harmony with her attachment, she resigned herself to it without hesitation, and thenceforward looked upon him as her husband, and vowed never to accept the offers of another. After perusing the note, she placed it in her table-drawer, and made a visit to the abbess, who had lately treated her with coldness and indifference. Desirous, upon returning to her cell, again to read the tender effusions of her lover, she opened the drawer, and was beyond expression amazed and terrified at not finding it either there or in any part of her chamber. Persuaded that somebody had taken it away during her absence, she bitterly

bitterly reproached herself with not having destroyed it; but regret being now useless, she wisely thought that her only method was not to cause any suspicion by reclaiming or inquiring after it.

The time for the interview being arrived, Amelina repaired to the garden, and went directly to the great walk, where, hearing herself called to in a low voice, she found it proceeded from Florrello; and advancing to meet him, she was presently in the arms of her admirer. How delicious was this moment, when their hearts could expand without restraint, when they might freely abandon themselves to all the effusions of their mutual tenderness!

When the first instants of delight were passed, Amelina related all the circumstances that had preceded her aunt's

departure from Villa-Flora, and failed not to mention the casket that donna Lucia had left for her, at the same time describing the contents.

Florello was equally at a loss with Amelina to find any satisfactory reason for donna Lucia's sudden departure, and for the mysterious events that had taken place in the Castle, which it was in the power of time only to unveil. He then informed Amelina of the methods he had adopted to ensure his correspondence with his cousin Edmund; and that, having easily secured the good offices of Beatrix, who was now entirely devoted to him, she had forwarded his letters by the assistance of a trusty peasant, who brought back the answers with the greatest diligence and exactitude.

After Amelina had been made acquainted

quainted with these arrangements, Florello entreated and obtained her permission to write as well to his aunt as to her son Edmund, in order to consult them upon the project of their escape out of the convent.—“ I am too well convinced of their friendship,” continued he, “ not to know that they will immediately take all the necessary measures for our success.”

Another interview being fixed upon for the following evening, at the same time and place—“ Dearest Amelina,” said Florello, upon their meeting, “ I have received an answer from Edmund, which I will communicate to you ; but as it is impossible to peruse it here, let us go into the Claudian chapel, where we shall find a lamp, and be in safety.”

When they arrived in the chapel, Flo-

rello

[REDACTED] now over our heads, and
[REDACTED] that was it when we
[REDACTED] the [REDACTED] the com-
[REDACTED] The signs are just signi-
[REDACTED] the last moment now, that I
[REDACTED] the wall the
[REDACTED] will expire,
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] her
[REDACTED] You will re-
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] that I by no
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] and
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] of my ob-
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] for your information

PLATE

If the ~~misses~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~
tolls. See ~~you~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
~~west~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
Busses and Buses in ~~the~~
to ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
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~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~

that I should make the experiment; and if the cavern should have an outlet into the country, we ought undoubtedly to prefer that mode of escaping to any other."

" Well then," answered Florello, " since you feel sufficiently courageous to visit this cavern, which is probably more extensive than you imagine, I will not make any objection to it, and will only insist upon your adopting such precautions as are necessary for the prevention of any danger. To-morrow Beatrix shall convey to your cell some wax tapers, a tinder-box, and some provisions; and I advise you to begin your excursion about two in the morning, and not to return before the following night. Beatrix shall take care to answer all inquiries about you, by saying that a slight indisposition

indisposition confines you to your cell, and that you have too severe a headache to receive any body."

"I will readily follow your advice, my kind friend; but you must add a ball of packthread to the things you have mentioned, that I may the more easily find my way back again, if I should be puzzled amongst the galleries."

When they had settled their plans, they separated, highly satisfied with each other, and with their prospects, and returned to the convent, full of the hope of being speedily liberated from confinement.

Fatal curiosity! destructive obstinacy! of what ills are you not the cause! Imprudent youth! why not quietly await the moment that friendship has fixed for your deliverance and happiness? But who

who can struggle
contend again,
events of our
and neither can
can in anywise
on by an irresis-
sible force a feeble
force of the tried away.

CHAPTER II.

BEATRIX having supplied Amelina with every thing that the pretended novice had demanded, carefully arranged in a small basket, the daughter of Leontio quitted her cell as the clock struck two, and cautiously descending the stairs and traversing the garden, hastened directly to the Solitude.

Every thing seeming quiet in the chapel, she entered it without hesitation, and judging that she might safely go down into the cavern, she pushed the spring of the panel in the altar, and easily

easily opened and removed it; then lighting a taper at the lamp, and endeavouring to deceive herself as to the consequences of her enterprise, she went down the two first steps into the vault, and replacing the panel without difficulty, descended the winding staircase into the cavern. She then tied one end of the ball of thread to a large stone upon the ground, and advanced with unflattering resolution about an hundred yards along the middle alley, when she was unexpectedly stopped by an iron door, fastened by several locks and bolts.

Although she felt extremely desirous of knowing whether it conducted, Amelina immediately perceived the inutility of her efforts against obstacles which it seemed impossible for her to surmount, and returned to the foot of the staircase,

from

from whence she passed into the left-hand gallery, and after some time arrived at a spacious square, where the cavern branched out into an infinity of alleys, that appeared all to take different directions.

Without embarrassing herself in choosing, where all were equally indifferent, Amelina followed the passage that was nearest to her, and, after being frequently delayed by heaps of stones and rubbish, reached a kind of vaulted chamber, of a circular form, without any other inlet than that by which she had arrived there.

Seating herself upon a stone bench, and carefully examining the chamber, she observed in the centre of the ceiling a large round hole, which, from the wind that forcibly blew down it, she concluded to be a tunnel, communicating above ground. A vast quantity of thick ropes,

with

with several iron hooks, the use of which she was unable to conjecture, lay coiled up against one side of the wall.

The impossibility of proceeding any farther obliged Amelina to return along the gallery, until she found another passage, which she entered, but was presently alarmed by a murmuring noise at a distance, that induced her to stop; and having listened for a moment, she clearly distinguished the sound of steps, that seemed approaching her; she therefore ran back towards the circular chamber, and, anxious to discover the persons who were coming towards her, she concealed her taper within a crevice in the wall, and placed herself behind an angle that was formed by the division of the galleries.

It was not long before she saw in the passage she had quitted a glimmering light,

fight, that increased in proportion as it drew near; and soon afterwards four men, of gigantic stature, each of whom held a lighted torch, and in the midst of whom was a phantom clothed in black, carrying a large covered basket, issued from the gallery, and she heard one of the men inquire when the captain was expected to return?

"He returns not till to-morrow," said another.

"Is that true?" said the former to the phantom.

"Yes, yes, it 'is perfectly true—But let us hasten on," answered the pretended spectre, whose voice Amelina instantly knew to be that of Perpetua, the confidential lay-sister of the abbess.

When they had passed on, Amelina persuading herself that there was no

danger in following Perpetua and her companions, who were not likely to turn back, pursued the path they had taken, and after a considerable time, reached a door, extremely low and narrow, which she opened without difficulty ; but in doing so, her taper was extinguished by a draught of air, occasioned by the opening of the door.

Alone, in a cavern with whose windings and extent she was unacquainted, plunged in the terrifying obscurity of this dismal spot, and fearing to be detected by persons whose intentions and pursuits were certainly suspectable, Amelina experienced apprehensions by no means astonishing upon so trying an occasion.

So great was her agitation, that she totally forgot the means which her basket

ket afforded of renewing her light; and her terror increased when she reflected that her clew had long since been expended, and that she might be lost in such an inextricable labyrinth; she therefore deemed it more advisable to proceed, but she had scarcely passed the threshold of the door, than she stumbled against something that uttered a harsh but piercing sound, which being prolonged for a few moments, mournfully resounded throughout the cavern.

The trembling Amelina quickly withdrew from the object that had terrified her, and her excessive alarm restoring her recollection, and reminding her that she possessed the means of lighting her taper, she struck the steel, and quickly procured what she desired.

As soon as her eyes became accustom-

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ed to the brilliancy of the light, she observed with surprise that she was in a spacious sepulchral vault, and surrounded by tombstones, cenotaphs, images, and various attributes of the dead. She then approached the object that had alarmed her by its noise, and found it to be an instrument called a tamtam, formerly in use upon great funeral ceremonies, and that having set her foot upon a spring connected with the hammer, it had struck against the instrument, and produced the sounds*.

At

* The tamtam, or temtem, is an instrument of percussion, that we are supposed to have borrowed from the Chinese. It is a large basin of bell-metal and silver, rather deep, and pierced with a small round hole, exactly in the centre. Upon striking it with a hammer, it utters long-continuing sounds, well calculated to inspire terror. In the third act of Romeo and Juliet, as represented

At any other time Amelina would have attentively examined the antique monuments that filled the vault; but the desire of finding her way out checked her curiosity, and discovering a staircase near the tamtam, she hastily ascended it, and at length passed through an

E 3,

aperture,

vented at the theatre Feydeau, at Paris, it is customary to strike the melancholy tamtam, though in fact there is no mention of such an instrument in the description of the funeral pomp detailed in Shakespeare's tragedy.

The Armenians have an instrument nearly of the same kind, being a sort of bell, which they strike with an iron rod, with more or less violence, according as they wish to modulate its vibrations.—See LABORDE's *Essay on Music*, Vol. 1. article ARMEN.

The Egyptians had an instrument nearly similar, which they struck in honour of Cybèle and Isis.—See LABORDE, Vol. 1.

John J. Rousseau mentions an ancient instrument of percussion, called *tintinnabulum*, that was probably of the same nature as the tamtam.—See his *Dictionary of Music*, Vol. 2.

aperture, near which lay a large stone, evidently designed to cover it.

Encouraged by the appearance of daylight, Amélina, upon looking round, perceived she was in a chapel that had once been sumptuously decorated, but was now neglected and in decay. The walls were clothed with wainscot, upon which were carved various subjects from the scriptures ; many valuable paintings were dispersed around the building, and several lustres were suspended from the ceiling. But the effects of desertion, and the ravages of time, were conspicuous throughout : the rain having penetrated through the roof, had tarnished and destroyed the lively colours with which the ceiling had been ornamented ; the grass grew between the crevices of the disjointed pavement, and the wainscot,

sot, swoln by the damp; was every-where mouldering and cracked.

A majestic mausoleum occupied one side of the chapel, and attracted the attention of Amelina. Upon a base of white marble arose an obelisk of the same, at whose four corners were four statues, in the attitude of grief; each of these statues held up the corner of a shroud, that half concealed the obelisk, upon whose summit was the figure of Time, represented by a winged skeleton, holding a scythe in one hand and a clepsydra in the other, and seeming on the point of flying from the monument. At the foot of it was a tablet of black marble, upon which was a Latin epitaph, in letters of gold; but all that Amelina could decipher was—“ *Hic jacet . . .*

Leontio . . . Villa-Flora . . . MDCC
“ . . . monument . . . in pace.”

“ Heavens!” exclaimed she, “ is it possible that I am in the chapel of Villa-Flora, near the monument of my father? In truth I cannot doubt of it, for there is the name of Leontio, and every thing convinces me I am in the chapel of the Castle. Let me lose no time in determining the nature of my conjectures.”

Thus saying, she hurried to the door, which stood half open, and presently passed into a spacious square, which she instantly recognized to be the second court of the Castle of Villa-Flora; but her astonishment was so great at finding herself in the place of her birth, that she almost doubted the reality of what she saw.

saw. There it was, however, that she had found the murdered infant, the year before; and there were the traces of the path which Gerardo had made amongst the thorns, and which she now followed to the gates that separated her from the first court. But though they were unlocked, and she pushed against them with all her strength, it required a more vigorous arm than Amelina's to make them turn upon their hinges, and she was forced to give up her design.

The day was dull and rainy; a cold wind howled around the court, and every thing added to the gloom that constantly hung over those deserted and melancholy structures. Amelina felt, however, the strongest inclination to visit the interior of the Castle. She was alone, indeed, but what danger could she

incur? It did not appear to be more than eight in the morning; how, therefore, could she employ herself until the approaches of evening allowed her to descend into the cavern, in order to accomplish her return to the monastery?

But another obstacle presented itself to the execution of her wishes; a large iron grate excluded her from access to the main body of the Castle, and she feared there was no possibility of opening it: but before she attempted it, she returned into the chapel for her basket, and remarking opposite her father's monument a spacious and richly-ornamented pew, that had before escaped her observation, she entered it, and perceived a small door, which she pushed against, and found that it opened into a winding gallery of great length.

Amelina

Amelina immediately proceeded along it, in the persuasion that it would conduct her to the apartments she was desirous of visiting; and reaching the principal vestibule of the Castle, she mounted a marble staircase, where several windows shed a dismal light through the small panes of glass, upon which were painted the arms of the house of Villa-Flora, consisting of three dragons argent, on a field gules, with two Moors proper, as supporters.

When the daughter of Leontio had ascended the stairs, she found herself in a vast hall, that seemed to lead to a variety of apartments, and opening the nearest door, she passed along a dark passage, and arrived at a circular room, lighted from above, and decorated with

fresco paintings, considerably impaired by time.

She then entered a bedchamber, remarkable for its loftiness, and hung with tapestry, on which were represented persons whose garments were covered with sentences in the Syriac and Hebrew languages. The bed, of green brocade, was embroidered with gold, and trimmed with gold fringe of a great depth; but the curtains, half drawn, displayed to the wondering Amélina sheets that by their whiteness appeared to have been there but a short time. Antique chains of green and gold, thickly coated with dust, were scattered in disorder about the room, and an ebony bureau, inlaid with ivory, and a few wormeaten tables, composed the rest of the furniture of the room,

room, which was dimly lighted by two lofty windows of painted glass.

The walls were ornamented with portraits, whose antiquated dress denoted them to be those of the family of Villa-Flora; and Amelina felt peculiarly interested by one that represented a young man of a mild and most engaging countenance, who with eyes of tenderness seemed to contemplate a medallion, upon which was painted a young and beautiful female. The medallion was surrounded by a garland of roses, the freshness of whose colouring harmonized with that which adorned the lips of her whose image was exhibited.

The modern habiliments of these persons, united in one picture, convinced Amelina that they were the portraits of her parents; and the pious enthusiasm with

with which they filled her inducing her to kiss those dear features, which she now beheld for the first time, she mounted upon a table, and endeavoured, but without success, to detach the picture from the wall.

As she raised herself up for that purpose, her knees accidentally struck against the wall, and produced a hollow sound, which tempting Amelina to lift up the tapestry, she perceived and opened a small door, but had no sooner passed its threshold, than the wind, rushing violently through some broken panes, instantly closed it, and, on account of the particular construction of the lock, deprived her of the possibility of reopening it.

She was now in a large closet, whose circular form led her to imagine that it belonged

belonged to one of the round towers; and in the black and gloomy wainscot were various shelves, filled with parchment writings and old books.

After Amelina had looked around her, she attempted to open the closet door, but had the inexpressible vexation of finding that all her efforts were unavailable, and that, by the means of some secret spring in the lock, the door was forever closed against her. Neither was it possible to escape through the window, for it was not only guarded by an iron grating, but was very narrow, and much beyond her reach. Then it was that Amelina's resolution was staggered, and that she began to repent, and tax herself with indiscretion, for she saw, that when the provisions in her basket should be

be exhausted, she must inevitably perish in the closet.

Absorbed in the melancholy reflections suggested by her alarming situation, Amelina lay down upon the floor: but whilst she lay, with her face upon the boards, and sobbed and wept with bitterness and self-reproach, she felt a light current of air, that insinuated itself through some crevices in the floor. Her anxious mind caught immediately at the probable means of escape thus unexpectedly afforded her; and narrowly examining the boards, she perceived, with inexpressible delight, that one of them pushed over another upon grooves, and opened upon a staircase, which she lost no time in descending, rejoicing at a deliverance so happy and so providential,

widetial, from the most cruel of all deaths.

The staircase conducted her into a passage that led into a long suite of apartments, which she traversed with rapidity, in hopes of soon finding her way out of the Castle, when she suddenly stopped, and became motionless, on hearing the deadened buzzing of a voice at a short distance,

Amelina was so astonished at such sounds, in a place where silence appeared to have fixed its empire, that she was not thoroughly persuaded of the reality until she had listened more attentively; then holding in her breath, and walking as lightly as possible, she passed through two rooms, the doors of which stood open; but as she approached a third, with the door closed, she distin-
guished

guished the words that were articulated; and looking through the keyhole, discovered—oh, terrible to behold!—a figure resembling a spectre, almost covered with drapery like a shroud. Its face was livid and ghastly; its eyes devoid of lustre, and sunk within the sockets; it was standing before a desk, on which lay a great book, and pronounced, in a grave and sepulchral voice, some words, that Amelina knew to be fragments of the Psalms of David.

The apartment was dimly lighted by a single taper, whose feeble rays rather added to the horror of the scene. But whilst Amelina examined with dismay a spectacle so mournful, the figure ceased to pray, the taper was extinguished, and nothing more was heard but an acute shriek, that lasted only for a moment.

Not

Not knowing what to think of this adventure, Amelina returned through the first rooms, and sat down for an instant, in order to recover from her agitation. But every thing contributed to increase rather than to diminish it—the wind howled sullenly along the passages in the Castle, the doors shook at every blast, and the rain beat hard against the half-broken and shattered windows. She was not long, therefore, before she continued her progress; but the more she exerted herself, the less possibility did she find of extricating herself from this labyrinth of apartments; nor was it until she had made many circuitous searches, that she at length found herself in the great vestibule.

From thence she hastily repaired to the chapel, where finding every thing quiet,

quiet, she recruited her exhausted strength and spirits with some provisions out of her basket, lighted her taper, and courageously descending into the sepulchral vault, passed between the tombstones, and reached the door where she had been so terrified by the extinction of her light.

She advanced with great precaution along the subterraneous passages until she had recovered the clew that was to conduct her to the outlet; but the instant she had secured it, she hurried on with all practicable speed, dreading to hear other steps than her own resound along any of the numerous alleys in the cavern.

Fortunately, however, she arrived in the Claudian chapel without accident or alarm, and with equal success regained

her

her cell in the evening, when, feeling extremely fatigued, she lay down, but was soon after visited by Beatrix, with a message from sister Fidelia, who, she said, was particularly anxious to hear of her return.

Amelina told Beatrix to inform the pretended novice that she had fully succeeded in her enterprise, and that she would tell her every thing about it the next morning, if she would meet her in the apartments of the abbess.

Upon her repairing thither, after church, she found Rosalina and Fiorello with the abbess. At the sight of each other, the hearts of the lovers throbbed with vehemence; their timid looks bespoke the cruelty of the restraint they suffered, and their fervent wishes to break through it. And when they had paid

paid their respects to the holy mother; Amelina found means to indicate to Florello her wishes of meeting him that evening in the garden, which so transported him with joy, that he was nearly betrayed to Rosalina by his emotions.

The day was particularly sultry, and the abbess having been confined within doors by some business of importance to the community, quitted her cell after supper, with a view of enjoying in the garden the refreshing breezes of the evening.

Leaning upon the arm of the lay-sister Perpetua, who possessed her entire confidence, she proceeded towards one of the little groves that ornamented the garden, and seating herself upon a bench behind a thick group of shrubs, began a conversation upon indifferent matters with

with Perpetua, after which she turned the discourse to the great consideration she had obtained in the province, and dwelt with seeming complacency upon the subject.

“ Yes, I confess, Perpetua, that I think I merit the marks of respect and esteem that are bestowed upon me; and it is without any degree of vanity or self-love that I make you this avowal. What! is not the public veneration strictly due to virtues so rigorously practised, so uniformly adhered to, during so many years? What woman ever resisted, as I have done, the numerous temptations that unite to besiege and undermine our feeble hearts? What woman but myself would have consecrated to penance and mortification her youth and powerful attractions? No there

there is none like to me—none but Theresa could have subdued our natural propensity to pleasure, and the demands of a warm constitution, or have supported with such unvarying constancy a monastic life, and its most rigid regulations."

The lay-sister, who perfectly well knew what opinion to entertain, made no reply, but gently inclined her head, and the abbess proceeded.

" But whilst every thing else is combined to gratify me, I am thwarted by two persons, who endeavour to humiliate me. Rosalina seeks every method of delaying the pronunication of her vows, and Fidekia appears but too well disposed to follow her example. The little lady of Villa-Flora no doubt seconds her intentions: but I will take care

care, and put an end to their cabals. What! can I see without indignation two novices desert the convent of Santa-Maria, after having solicited the honour of being admitted there? But, I will inform them that these affected delays no longer suit me; and, to convince them of my fixed determination, I will name a precise term for the performance of their promises. If they consent to take the veil, I will forget every thing; but if they threaten to leave the convent, everlasting imprisonment, or the faggots of the Inquisition——”

She suddenly stopped, thinking she heard somebody coming towards her; and in fact the lovers, ignorant that the abbess was in the grove, were come thither, more freely to talk over their projects:

Thinking themselves alone, they abandoned themselves to the transports that were inspired by the idea of so soon finding themselves at liberty, and fearing, that if they attempted to escape through the cavern, they should not so easily evade from the Castle of Villa-Flora, they agreed patiently to await the day that Edmund had fixed for their departure.

Athelina had acquainted Florell with the circumstances of her subterraneous excursion, before they sat down near the shrubs that separated them from the abyss; but she thus became informed of their connexion and original intentions; and, notwithstanding her attachment and indignation, which she with difficulty restrained, she suffered them to pursue their walk, totally unsuspecting that

that their conversation had been over-heard.

"Well!" said she, when they were retired; "well, Perpetua, did you ever hear of such iniquity? Surely you must shudder at such wickedness! A holy house to be thus profaned!—a man to live for months amongst the virgins of the Lord! What sin! what monstrous abomination! I am indeed enraged and disquieted beyond measure! Something however must immediately be done.—Let us return to my apartments, where I will assemble the holy sisters; and having dispatched a messenger to Aveiro for the proper officers to arrest these sacrilegious wretches, we will deliberate upon the punishment to be inflicted on them."

Amelina and Florello, in the mean

while, continued their walk, until they reached the banks of a rivulet, where they stopped, and silently contemplated the reflection of the moon upon the water, but were suddenly interrupted in their reverie by the sound of a soft pathetic voice, singing a few lines, alluding to their present situation.

Amelina, who had listened with attention, was so affected by what she had heard, that, imprudent as it was, she could not help uttering a few words expressive of surprise and admiration, when, observing somebody coming towards them from behind the trees, she instantly knew it to be Rosalina.

“ Imprudent young people,” said that novice, in a low voice, “ you are undone ! The abbess has discovered every thing—she is acquainted with your projects, and

is,

is, at this moment, employed about the methods of seizing and of punishing you: fly, therefore, directly!—hesitate not an instant, but fly whilst yet you have the power! Go, dear and interesting children! and may Heaven grant you its protection! I have exposed myself to every danger for your sake; but the consequences are indifferent to me, provided my endeavours should prove successful. Farewell! and remember the unfortunate Rosalina!"

The novice had spoken with so much rapidity, and had disappeared so instantaneously after the last words, that the astonished and affrighted lovers had no time to inquire into details.

"Our time is precious," cried Florello; "let us not lose a moment unemployed!" And then drawing out some

paper, he wrote these words upon it with a pencil :—

“ MY DEAR EDMUND,

“ Our projects are known to the abbess—her vengeance threatens us—but we have the means of escaping it. Leave Aveiro without loss of time, and meet us speedily under the walls of Villa-Flora.”

“ Dearest Amelina!” resumed Florello, “ wait for me but a few minutes, whilst I carry this note to Beatrix, who will directly forward it to Edmund; and we will hasten away as soon as I return.”

Without waiting for her answer, he hurried

hurried away, and in less than ten minutes reappeared with the precious casket, and a parcel containing the man's apparel that had been sent him by his friend.

He found Amelina plunged in apprehension and despair; but on his taking her hand to lead her towards the Solitude, the desire of escaping the pursuit and vengeance of the abbess subdued every other consideration, and she even invited Florello to redouble the celerity of his steps.

Just as they entered the Solitude, they saw a number of lights moving in the vicinity of the convent; and as they justly suspected them to belong to persons who were pursuing them, they hurried into the chapel, removed the panel, and having replaced it as well

as their agitation would permit, descended into the cavern with the lamp that was burning in the chapel.

CHAPTER III.

IN conformity to her project, the abbess having summoned to her cell the most ancient and venerable among the nuns, acquainted them with the dreadful secret she had just detected.

When these sanctified and aged virgins found that a man had remained so long disguised amongst them, they burst forth into such transports of rage, that the abbess herself was forced to set bounds to the violence of their indignation.

After having deliberated upon the

measures to be adopted, they unanimously advised their chief to seize the wretches guilty of such heinous crimes, to throw them into the prisons of the convent, and at different periods to spread abroad the report of their deaths, by which means they would avoid every kind of scandal and public observation, and the community would be avenged, without its reputation having been compromised.

This advice being adopted, the abbess ordered the nuns who had assisted at the council to accompany her with torches; and having descended into the garden, they took different paths, in the hope of the more readily finding those of whom they were in search. It was in truth a scene of the greatest singularity that was exhibited by these reverend matrons,

who

who now performed the functions of al-
guards.

Every corner in the garden was tho-
roughly visited by them; but, not having
discovered their prey in any part of it,
they sought for them in the park, with
the same ardour, and the same fruitless-
ness. When they reached the Solitude,
they assembled and held council; and,
as certain that the objects of their pursuit
could be concealed nowhere, but in the
island, they passed the bridge, after post-
ing two musketeers as sentinels at the foot of
it: but the abbess walked directly into
the chapel, with the firm conviction that
she should there find the persons whom
she wished to apprehend.

Her hopes being disappointed, she re-
mained for a moment confounded at the
idea that her intended victims had es-

eaped, and perceiving that the lamp was no longer suspended from the ceiling, she left the chapel, full of consternation, and assembling her followers, and telling them that she was now persuaded the criminals had withdrawn from her territories, reconducted them to the monastery, assuring them of the inutility of their researches.

The abbess, who had more than one motive for wishing to stop the lovers in their flight, wrote to the corregidor of Aveiro, entreating him instantly to send his alguazils to the Castle of Villa-Flora, where they would find a novice and a boarder, who had taken refuge there, after having broken through the boundaries of the convent.

When her letter was dispatched, she drew up the following paper, and having required

required the principal nuns of the community to sign it, sent it off to the commissary of the holy office at Aveiro, desiring him to gratify her request without delay :—

" By the grace of God, Theresa, abbess of the monastery of Santa Maria, and the other religious persons of the same, to his reverence the commissary of the holy office of the Inquisition.

" We are under the necessity of acquainting you, that our holy house has been profaned by a young man, who, introducing himself under the garb of a novice, desirous to take the veil, has seduced a young person of rank, a boarder in our convent, to become accomplice in his

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Such were the measures adopted for the gratification of her unjust revenge by the abbess of the Carmelites, who, notwithstanding the virtues of which she made such a display and such a boast, permitted herself to proceed to the most violent extremities. Any other but herself would perhaps have been satisfied with suffering the young people to escape, without making such inquiries as must occasion much animadversion and discourse; but Theresa had secret motives for thus braving every other consideration, and the condign punishment of the transgressors could alone appease the inveteracy of her anger.

Whilst the abbess and her companions were eagerly pursuing them to the Solitude, the fugitives reached, without accident, the chapel of the Castle, where

Amelina,

Amelina, kneeling before the monument of her father, implored the protection of the Almighty; and as she was thus occupied, Florello, perceiving a small letter-case upon the cornice of the monument, put it hastily into his pocket, and forgot to mention it to Amelina.

“ My dear Lemos,” said she, rising, “ I fear we shall be exceedingly perplexed to get out of the Castle; for when I quitted Villa-Flora, old Gérardo carefully locked the gates, and the walls are so high, that I see no possibility of climbing over them.”

“ My sweet friend,” replied Florello, “ do not let us alarm ourselves with the anticipation of difficulties, but let us put our trust in Heaven—it surely never will abandon us.”

They now proceeded to traverse the second

second court of the Castle; a profound silence reigned throughout that immense pile; but before they reached the gates leading into the outer court, Amelina thought she saw a light in one of the windows on the north side of the building, and was on the point of mentioning it to Florelle, when the light disappearing, she deemed it useless to disturb him with the remark. With much difficulty he at length forced open the gates, and turning towards the pavilion formerly occupied by Amelina, they had the satisfaction of finding it unlocked, and, from the state of the furniture, concluded that no one had been there since the departure of donna Lucia and her niece.

Having lighted two wax tapers that stood on the chimney in the library, they ascended the darkened stairs, and opening

ing the windows, Florello told Amelina that the day was breaking, and that it would be advisable to change their dress without delay; then leaving her the necessary accoutrements, he went down into the library, and quitted the garments of a novice. When he returned to the belvedere, the astonishment at their reciprocal metamorphosis was mutual. If Florello found his Amelina adorable in the dress of a young man, she, who had never seen him but in the ainsworth disguise of his assumed situation, was never weary of admiring him in the peculiar apparel of his sex; and she could not help remarking that Florello displayed as much grace and ease in his own dress as she now thought him awkward in his other.

The

The day had scarcely broken when Florello hearing somebody riding up the avenue, had presently the satisfaction of seeing the faithful Edmund, the friend of his heart, whom he loudly greeted from the belvedere ; and Amelina recollecting that her aunt had double keys to the outer gates, she ran to the other pavilion, and rejoining Florello with the keys, the gates were opened, and Edmund was instantly in the arms of his friend. They both felt, in all its force, the happiness of meeting after so long a separation ; and when the first effusions of friendship were passed, Edmund congratulated Florello upon his having had the good fortune to inspire the charming Amelina with such sentiments of tenderness. He at the same time addressed

her

her in a manner as flattering as it was delicate and elegant, and entreated her, to grant him her friendship and esteem.

Edmund, then in his twenty-first year, was small in stature, but remarkably well made; his dark chesnut hair curled naturally, and fell in small ringlets over his forehead; his eyes shone with vivacity and intelligence, and every feature was expressive of mildness and sensibility. Unacquainted with the art of speaking ill of others, Edmund never opened his lips but to utter words that proved the goodness of his heart. Possessing knowledge far above his years, he displayed his attainments with modesty and deference; uniting decorum with gaiety, he tasted the pleasures of life without offence against morality, and without fearing reproach either from others

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others or from himself; and brave when circumstances required, and active in all bodily exercises, he was master of a variety of talents, and wholly destitute of the vanity that so frequently accompanies them. Such was the friend of Florello, and such indeed was also the character of the latter; so that it would have been impossible to decide which of the two cousins was the most accomplished.

After Florello had related in the best vedere all the circumstances of his escape, Edmund informed him that he had quitted Aveiro as soon as he had received his note, and that whilst his horse was preparing, he had acquainted his mother with the event, who had promised to send his servant Augusto after him with three horses, and a considerable

able sum of money." As soon as he arrives," continued Edmund, "we will depart for Lisbon by a circuitous route; and when we are once in the capital, we shall have nothing to apprehend from the abbots, whose attacks we can easily counteract, by the power of our families and connections. But I fear that our amiable companion will be unable to support the fatigues of such a journey."

"Be not uneasy tiptoe that head," answered Florelle; "I can bear every thing. The natural weakness of my sex will be no obstacle to our expedition; my courage will supply every other defect."

"My dear friend," said Florello, "it seems advisable that with your present dress you should assume another name, that we may not betray your situation by calling you Athelina; and henceforward

ward

ward you shall bear the appellation of Octavio."

Whilst Florelle was speaking, Edmund thought he heard his name loudly pronounced from without; and on perceiving Augusto at the gate of the Castle, he hurried down to open it, and was followed by Florello and Amelina; but they were overwhelmed with vexation, when the pale and trembling servant related that whilst the marchioness of Vellanès was making preparations for the journey, she had received the following note:—

“ Fly, signora! Lose not an instant! The holy office is about to send its familiars to arrest yourself, and your son, under pretence that you have introduced

introduced a man into the convent of Santa Maria. Be that as it may, you are not ignorant of the maxims of the Inquisition, and will profit by this seductive advice."

"The signora having perused the note," resumed Augusto, "ordered me immediately to ride to Villa-Flora, to give you the note and a diamond ring, and to inform you that she had barely money enough to carry her to Lisbon, where she expects to be in three days, and where she hopes you will join her at the palace of Almeida. But you have no time to lose, signor; for as I turned round on the last hill, I saw at a distance a body of horsemen, who, I have no doubt, are the alquazils, and who cannot fail

of being here within less than half an hour."

"Well," said Edmund, "we must hasten into the thickest part of the forest; but do you, Augusto, return instantly to Aveiro, apply to my mother's friends for some money, and rejoin us in the night at the entrance of the wood, where we are going to conceal ourselves. If you should not find us there, go directly to Lisbon, and you will hear of me at the palace of Almeida."

Florelio now running up to the belvedere to secure the casket, saw the troop of horsemen advancing along the valley, with such speed that they must necessarily reach the Castle in a few minutes—"Away!" cried he, as he descended; "they are close at hand. Let us instantly dart into the forest." And thus

thus saying, they ran with speed towards their hiding-place, whilst Augusto returned to Aveiro through such by-paths as he concluded would conceal him from the alguazils.

When the fugitives had advanced two or three hundred paces into the wood, they stopped to deliberate upon the measures they were to pursue.

"Let us try," said Florello, "to reach some sequestered village, where we may procure horses, for Amelina cannot long bear the fatigue of travelling on foot, and our appearance might give rise to suspicions."

"True," said Amelina; "and as it is impossible to foresee what evil fortune may befall us, let us divide the money in the casket into three parts." Then taking out the bags, she distributed the

contents amongst them; and putting the portfolio and snuff-box next her bosom, she left behind her the casket, which she no longer considered of any use.

Just as this arrangement was made, a confused sound of voices and horses was heard at no great distance. The algnazils had found the gates of the Castle open, and Edmund's horse straying about the court; and concluding that the fugitives were either in the Castle or the neighbourhood, they examined the pavilions, and found the novice's dress, the female garments of Amelina, and the silver lamp belonging to the chapel of Claudia. They then resolved to search the forest, which appeared to be the only place where they could take refuge, and leaving four of their company at

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the gates, immediately proceeded to execute their intentions.

Love, friendship, purity, and virtue, were on the point of becoming the prey of unfeeling men, whose barbarous pleasure consisted in fulfilling the orders of the great and the revengeful, and in inflicting cruelties upon the helpless and the innocent—the insatiable vengeance of Theresa was on the eve of being deliciously indulged ; but at the first alarm, Florelle taking Amelina by the hand, and followed by Edmund, sought for safety in the renewal of flight. Fatigue, apprehension, and inanition, soon, however, caused so great a revolution in Amelina, that she fell senseless upon the ground : but this privation of her faculties had at least the good effect of arrest-

ing for a moment the knowledge of her perilous situation.

“ Edmund !” cried Florello, in despair, “ she has yielded to such reiterated commotions—she is no more !—Ah, my God ! she is no more !”

“ My dear friend——she breathes still ; but she must be quickly succoured, or——”

“ Ah !” interrupted Florello, “ the fear of the Inquisition is nothing to me in this tremendous moment—I will go and implore the pity of the alguazils ; they alone can——I must save her life or perish——Stop for me——In the name of Heaven let me conjure you not to abandon her !”

He then ran off with the utmost speed, and was no sooner gone, than Amelina, recovering

recovering from that state of suspended animation which had been occasioned by her weakness, lifted up her eyes, and not perceiving Florello, asked, in a languid tone, where he was? Edmund having informed her of what had passed, her cheeks suddenly grew red, her eyes recovered their lustre, and she earnestly requested Edmund to pursue and bring him back—"He cannot be far off," she said; "run and save him!—let him not be the victim of his generosity!"

Edmund appearing unwilling to leave her—"You hesitate!" cried she, rising. "Well then, I will imitate his noble conduct; I will throw myself into the midst of the danger, in order to extricate him. To me belongs that glorious office ——It is to his beloved——"

"Stay! stay!" exclaimed the affrighted

Edmund.—“I will instantly obey you;” and he precipitately quitted her.

Amelina seeing nothing of them after some time, determined to return towards the Castle in pursuit of them; but hearing the sound of several loud voices, and supposing with reason that the algazils were approaching her, her apprehensions superseded all the other sensations of her disordered mind, and she fled in an opposite direction. Fear furnished her, as it were, with wings, and she rapidly advanced among the thorns and briars, without regarding the scratches made by them upon her hands and cheeks, and at length reached a part of the forest, so gloomy, and apparently so impenetrable, that she imagined herself in the most perfect security; and discovering a large hollow tree, she crept into it, with

with the determination of remaining there until she should think it prudent to return towards the Castle. She had been there above an hour, and already began to persuade herself that all danger was at an end, when she suddenly distinguished several voices, that seemed drawing near to her concealment.

"Piquillo," said one, in a rough voice, "don't you think that we ought to examine this thicket?—Perhaps they may have taken refuge there."

"Oh no," answered another, "Who the devil could get in there? I am sure nothing but a weazel could creep in."

"Bah!" replied the first; "I will undertake to go all over it myself."

To this no answer was given; but Amelina was presently relieved by hearing another voice exclaim—"There is

no occasion to hunt there ; the birds are flown—for Perez, who remained at the Castle, saw one of them hastening towards Aveiro, and the others have surely followed him.”

“ In that case,” said Piquillo, “ they have certainly judged well, for they will fall into the net without further trouble on our part ; so that all we have to do is to go after them as fast as possible.”

As soon as they were gone, Amelina, with a palpitating heart, returned her silent thanks to Heaven for the protection that had been so providentially afforded her. She thought that the alguazils might probably have seen Augusto upon his return to Aveiro, and that she was indebted to their mistake for her deliverance ; and soon afterwards quitting her asylum, she endeavoured to find

find her way to the spot where she hoped to meet those from whom she had so cruelly been separated.

After wandering amongst the shrubs and thorns, whose interwoven branches detained her at every step, Amélina arrived at a narrow and winding path, that conducted her to an ancient tower, surrounded by its ruins and by thick and lofty trees. The walls were washed by a limpid stream, that lost itself in the crevices of a rock with a murmuring sound; and some aged ivy crept along the walls of the tower, upon whose summit grew the wild gooseberry-bush, and tufts of sweet-smelling jonquils.

The daughter of Leontio having entered the tower, and observed a circular room with a well in the centre of it, ascended a broken staircase, and reached

a chamber of similar form, where the decaying beams denoted the antiquity of the floor, which was pierced with a variety of holes. Harassed with fatigue, and covered with blood and dust, Amelina resolved upon remaining there, in order to recruit her exhausted strength, and notwithstanding the demands of hunger and her mental distress, she was quickly overcome by her weariness, and slept as soundly as if she had reposed upon the most voluptuous of couches.

Night began to spread its veil over the world when she awoke, and found herself so extremely weak, that she was unable to move from the spot on which she had rested; her limbs seemed benumbed—a deathlike coldness had seized her, and she felt as if she were on the brink of dissolution. Convinced that

she

she must inevitably perish in this deserted place, she wept with bitterness; and the idea which she formed of Florello's uneasiness at her loss increased the natural sorrows of her mind.

Whilst she was thus fruitlessly bewailing her hard fate, a light suddenly striking upon her eyes suspended her grief and lamentations, and afforded her the hope and prospect of an escape. The light, that had penetrated through the crevices in the floor, appeared to proceed from the well in the room beneath, and gradually rising, at length became so bright, as to discover to the astonished Amelina a man climbing up the sides of the well, holding in one hand a blazing torch, and in the other a rope, which he fastened to an iron ring within the wall of the chamber. He was followed by

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twenty other men, of a most ferocious aspect, whom Amelina with justice imagined to be robbers, carrying torches, and baskets, which they immediately deposited upon the floor.—“At last, my honest fellows,” said one who appeared to be the chief, “at last we are able to get out of this accursed country. Talk to me about women again!—they have always some crotchet in their heads, and I had rather serve five-and-twenty legions of devils than be subject to the caprice of one of those whimsical creatures. Were I to believe that old bel-dam, I might——But what matters it to me if they have made their escape? is that any concern of mine? Body of me! I am quite furious at the idea of having passed the whole day in marching about under ground. What! shall

Sebaldino

Sebaldino perform the office of an alguazil? By Lucifer, I am indignant at the thoughts of it!"

"Noble captain," said another, "don't think any more about the old hag. The devil fetch her! say I. But let us sit down, and enjoy the good things we have brought with us."

"You are right, friend Albert," said the captain; "I will follow your advice. Come, get every thing ready, and as soon as we have done, we will turn our backs upon the old Jezabel."

Whilst the banditti were spreading the provisions upon the floor, the terrified Amelina attentively examined the person who had named himself as Sebaldino, and who to a colossal size added an air of dignity, well calculated to overawe those of whom he was the chief. His

muscular

muscular and hairy arms, and extraordinary breadth of shoulders, bespoke the superiority of his strength ; his fiery eyes at once inspired terror, and announced decision and barbarity ; the savage cruelty of his aspect was considerably increased by the enormous mustachios that overshadowed the lower part of his face ; and his sallow countenance bore the impression of all the imperious passions of his mind, and of the ferociousness that reigned within his heart. He was clad in a red jacket, richly embroidered with gold, but having sleeves no lower than the elbows ; a black velvet cap, over which nodded a magnificent plume of black feathers, partly covered his short and bushy hair ; pantaloons of red cloth, embroidered like the jacket, and yellow morocco boots, composed the rest of his apparel ;

apparel; around his waist he wore a belt, well furnished with pistols, and an immense sabre at his side clattered against the ground as he moved his gigantic figure. Seating himself on the floor, with his back against the wall, his companions followed his example, and began their repast by the light of twenty torches, whose resinous flame gave a red and terrific hue to the fierce countenances of these ruffians.

Amelina, almost expiring for want of sustenance, looked anxiously towards the profuse display of provisions of which they were partaking; but her apprehensions of being discovered and assassinated so far surpassed her other fears, and the importunities of hunger, that, far from daring to go down, she was

fearful

fearful of making the slightest motion, and almost of drawing her breath.

When the voracious appetite of the banditti was in some measure satisfied, Sebaldino began again to talk about the woman of whom he had complained; and loading her with imprecations, swore bitterly that he would never set his foot in Portugal when once he had got clear of it.

"Why surely, captain," exclaimed Albert, "surely you are not serious! You will not give up all the treasures that you have entrusted to her?"

Sebaldino making no reply—"At all events," said another of the gang, "if the captain should leave her his share, I don't intend to give up mine; and in fact, I insist——"

"There

"There—take it!" interrupted Sebaldino, drawing a pistol, and blowing out the brains of the speaker. "It is thus I treat such insolent varlets.—Carry him directly into the forest."

His orders were obeyed without a murmur by some of the banditti, who returned to their meal with as much coolness as if nothing extraordinary had occurred.

"Captain," said Albert, knocking his glass against Sebaldino's, "will you allow me to speak to you with freedom?"

"Body of me, lieutenant! and what is to hinder you?"

"Why then I must tell you, that I am astonished at your tranquillity, after what you have just done. By Jesus! I quite envy your disposition; for though it costs me nothing to commit what the

vulgar

vulgar call a murder, the recollection of it torments me some time afterwards, and——”

“ Poor man!” rejoined Sebaldino, laughing hideously: “ what, thou growest remorseful? thou becomest tender-hearted? By my soul, I pity thee! But listen, and I will tell you how I got rid of all such weaknesses.”

After violently coughing, he sang, in a thundering voice, some stanzas in Italian, descriptive of the horrid actions of his life, his defiance of all justice, both human and divine, and his determination to heap victim upon victim, so as utterly to prevent the impossibility of being affected by tenderness or remorse.

“ Well sung and well said,” resumed Albert. “ I will not fail profiting by your lessons; and I now swear to you, that

that henceforward I will never spare a single creature that shall fall into my hands."

An ejaculation of horror escaped Amelina; the ruffians looked at each other with astonishment, and calling out—“We are betrayed—there is somebody above!” seized their arms, and ran up stairs, with Sebakino at their head.

CHAPTER IV.
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WHEN Edmund quitted Amelina, he expected to have found his friend near the boundary of the forest; but he reached it without seeing him, and was despairing of success, when he heard a voice repeatedly calling him by name. It proved to be that of Florello, who not having found any assistance, had lost himself in the wood, in endeavouring to trace his way back to Amelina, and meeting with a rivulet, was carrying some water in his hat for her relief. When Edmund had satisfied him as to

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the situation of Amelina, they continued their researches in the forest; but instead of returning to the place where they had left her, they so totally bewildered themselves, and were so far advanced in the thickest part of the wood, that they began to lose all hope, either of finding her, or of extricating themselves from the labyrinth of the forest. The sun was set, and a part even of the night was elapsed, before they discontinued their pursuit: the more they had sought to approach, the farther they had wandered from the Castle of Villa-Flora; and Florello, whose affliction was inexpressible, ran from side to side, like a person distracted, reproaching himself with the loss of Amelina, accusing Edmund of having deserted her, and filling the forest with his lamentations.

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The darkness of the night disabling them from proceeding, they lay down at the foot of a tree, where Florello passed the gloomy hours in mournful interpolations upon the object of his affections; but as soon as the sun had gilded the summits of the trees, the two friends recommenced their wanderings, and shortly afterwards found themselves in a valley, which, though cultivated and inhabited, was completely encompassed by the forest. Advancing towards a cottage, they perceived an old man sitting at the door, employed in making baskets of osiers. A luxuriant honeysuckle that entwined itself amongst the branches of a vine covered with flowers and verdure the humble walls of the cottage, which was surrounded by lilacs and laburnums. A small stream, that flowed over a bed of gravel,

gravel, washed the roots of the shrubs, and ran through a field where the orange, pomegranate, and lemon-trees, overshadowed the melon, and various other succulent legumes.

"Good old man," said Florello, "have you seen a youth, dressed nearly like myself, pass by?"

"No, my son. We are so far from any town, that we seldom see any one like you."

"But you can perhaps let us have something to eat?" said Edmund. "We are very much fatigued, and our hunger is great indeed."

"I have not much to offer you, my dear youths; but what I have is yours, and you are heartily welcome to it." Then desiring them to sit down on the bench before the door, he brought

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out some milk, eggs, and the produce of his vine; and whilst they devoured this simple but hospitable fare, Edmund inquired how far they were distant from a town?

"There is not any very near," replied the peasant, "for we are fifteen miles from Pocoborgo, and rather more from Aweito and Riccamonda."

"We want to go to Lisbon," said Vellanès. "Pray which is the nearest road?"

"That of Pocoborgo, where you will find every thing you wish for the continuance of your journey."

Edmund now proposed to his friend to repair to Lisbon without delay.— "You must acknowledge," he said, "that it is impossible for us to think of searching for Amelina in the forest, and you

you may be assured, that she will reach the capital before we shall; for it is most probable that in looking for us, she will have entered in with Augusto, who will have persuaded her to accompany him to Lisbon, where we shall find her in the palace of Almada, under the protection of thy mother."

I Florentine answered only by a sigh, that at once expressed the restlessness of his mind, and now! Here he was satisfied with the proposal; but finding no sufficient reason to impeach it, he acquiesced in Edmund's proposal.

"When the good old man saw them ready to set off, "There," he said, "follow that path till you are quite out of the wood, and you will find the road to Fecobriga at the end of it."

"Farewell, my worthy friend!" said

Edmund, “Do us the favour to accept this slender mark of our acknowledgement,” and then putting five crusades upon the table, he hurried away, and was as quickly followed by Florello.

“Heaven preserve you!” said the peasant; but perceiving the gold upon the table, he ran after them, crying out— “*Signor! signor!* pray take it back—I cannot accept such a sum.... Do, for Heaven’s sake, take it back!” but the wanderers affecting not to hear him, redoubled their pace, and were speedily out of sight of the good cottage.

Edmund at length succeeded in quieting the mind of Florello, who, animated by a ray of hope, congratulated himself that in the midst of his misfortunes he possessed a generous and tender-hearted friend, whose attentions alleviated the

weight upon his breast. Impatient to reach Lisbon, he pressed Edmund to accelerate his pace, and they walked with such speed as to reach Pocoborgo in the evening, where they recruited their exhausted strength, and early the next morning proceeded towards Lisbon, in a carriage they had hired for the journey.

Whilst they were on the road, Florello, recollecting the portfolio he had found in the chapel of Villa-Flora, determined to examine the contents, and took out a small manuscript, which appeared very difficult to decipher, on account of a number of erasures, and which was entitled *"Memoirs of Leontio, Marquis of Villa-Flora, written by himself."*

"Heaven!" exclaimed Florello, "is it possible that this can relate to the father of my Amelina? By what accident—"

" My dear Flora, let me examine it immediately; it will, perhaps, throw light upon the mysteries which took place in the Castle of Ville Flora just before the departure of Amelina, and which I am exceedingly anxious to unravel?"

Without further entreaty, Flora began the perusal of the manuscript in the following terms:

" Shut out from the world upwards of seventeen years—forever separated from my adored wife, and deprived of a beloved daughter and sister, who have supposed me to be no more, it is in the tomb where I am interred, alive, that I track this memorial of my feeble existence. Should my daughter one day read this fatal scroll, she should like her mother impatient with the sufferings of her father, her tears will console my plaintive shade!"

May the last wish that I form be one day realized! The termination of my deplorable existence is at hand! Eternal Being, receive me quickly into thy bosom! The happiness of my daughter depends upon the conclusion of my days; she will soon, therefore, be happy.—Let me make haste to write."

Florello paused upon the perusal of these words, and looking steadfastly at Edmund, expressed his astonishment by his silence; and Edmund, with equal amazement, signified it by an acclamation, and by desiring him instantly to proceed.

After the preceding introduction, Leontio related his early adventures, nearly in the same words as had been overheard by the two friends; whilst donna

Lucia recounted them to her niece; and being arrived at the period of his pretended death, the marquis of Villa-Flora continued his narrative as follows:—

"When the venerable bishop, who had honoured me by coming to Villa-Flora to baptise the new-born infant, was on the point of returning to Aveiro, I determined to accompany him to the bottom of the avenue, but being extremely thirsty, I asked for a glass of lemonade, which was brought me by Juliet, one of the marchioness's women. I had no sooner swallowed the beverage, than I felt an extraordinary shivering, and in a few moments became so faint, that it was necessary for the bishop to support me; but my weakness increasing, he called his servants, who conducted

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bid me to lay bed; after which the prelate departed for Aveiro; and promised to send me the best medical assistance from that town. Meanwhile the fever became more violent; and imagining that I had been poisoned, I recollect to my mind my acquaintance at Duino with the marchesa Doria; and persuading myself that, although I had never seen or even heard of her since I had quitted Sicily, she was the cause of my disorder, I most probably uttered in my delirium sentences incomprehensible to my attendants. My fever was succeeded by so profound a lethargy, that I was generally concluded to be no more; and, as I have since been told, the perfidious Juliet, taking advantage of Clementia's illness and the despair of donna Lucia, ordered me to be immediately placed in a coffin, so con-

structed was not to deprive me of sleep, and to be deposited in the mausoleum that I had caused to be erected in the church. I am unacquainted with the duration of my lethargy; but when I recovered my faculties, I found myself stretched upon some straw, in a native vault, lighted by a lamp. A shadow from thence over me; my coffin lay near me. I know not what thoughts my mind was crudely agitated, and almost doubting of my existence, I sorrowfully called upon those dear objects who thought me separated from them by death; but, alack no one replied to the accents of distress.

At length, concentrating all the ideas that crowded upon my imagination, I recalled to my mind various circumstances, and became convinced that Juliet had mixed a somniferous powder in the

lemonade

lemonade that she had given me, which had produced the symptoms and appearance of death ; but I could not possibly conceive with what view she had committed such a crime, or why I was shut up in such a vault.

" Whilst I puzzled myself with conjectures, the door opened, and I saw— Oh ! how can I describe my emotions ! how express the astonishing revolution in my mind ! I saw two persons in the dress of nuns ; one of whom, lifting up her veil, discovered to my astonished eyes the marchesa Doria—the very woman I had suspected—the very woman into whose character and views I had penetrated from the first moment of our acquaintance. Certain that she was the cause of my present melancholy situation, I attempted to approach, and

to lay hold of her; but my weakness was so great, that I instantly fell down upon the ground, and for the first time perceived that due means had been taken to prevent such enterprises, by a long chain fastened round one of my legs, and securely fixed into the wall.

— ‘Leontio,’ said the cruel Sicilian, seating herself upon my coffin, ‘listen to me with attention, and you will hear of circumstances that will astonish you.’ Then making a sign to her companion, who retired, she continued her discourse.

‘When you arrived at Palermo, you found me enjoying the charms of liberty, in consequence of the death of the marchese Doria, with whom I had passed a short but disgusting period in the chains of wedlock. The first moment of my acquaintance with you was fatal to my peace;

peace; I soon confessed that you were far from indifferent to me, and till the memorable combat between count Sebaldino and yourself, your whole conversation tended to persuade me that your passion was equal to my own—that you loved me in the tenderest manner, and that death alone could separate you from the object of your affections. After all my protestations of attachment, you thought proper to suppose that I preferred Sebaldino to yourself; though I never treated him but with contempt, you persisted in believing that I favoured his importunities; you attacked, and imagined you had killed him, and basely fled without seeing me, or giving me any other opportunity of convincing you of my innocence. Justly enraged at your vile behaviour, I swore to accomplish your destruction,

struction, and dispatching my emissaries into Portugal, to procure all the necessary details as to your family, situation, and pursuits, I was gratified to the utmost of my wishes, and only awaited the opportunity of vengeance. All my affection for you quitted me the instant you so cruelly abandoned me, and was replaced by hatred, indignation, and the insatiable desire of revenge; and as I knew that a Sicilian never forgave any one that had offended him, I found means to have an interview with Sebaldino, who was confined to his bed with his wounds.

"Count," I said, "let us, without ceremony or explanation, combine against the infamous Leontio; he has injured you, he has insulted me--let him fall under the united efforts of our wrath!"

You

You have long solicited my affections—second, my vindictive passions, and I am ready to gratify your desires. Let us depart the moment you are able—seize the object of our abhorrence, and transport him into a dungeon, where, as long as his existence shall continue, he may undergo the tortures it is my intention to inflict upon him."

"Yes," replied Sebaldino, who had listened to me with transport, "yes, let us unite, and punish the traitor as he deserves. I hate him as much as you detest him; would I could pound him into dust! When, however, he shall have fallen into our nets, I will yield my rights to you—you alone shall exercise our united vengeance; the office cannot be in hands more capable. I will now," continued he, "inform you, that

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for some time I have followed the business of a pirate, and that I have a number of men disposed to second me in every enterprise, and entirely devoted to my service. I am also well acquainted with a place admirably suited to our purpose ; and, to increase your satisfaction, I must tell you that it is a cavern in Portugal, in the neighbourhood of the Castle of Villa-Flora, and, as I suspect, connected with some part of that building. It is known only to myself and to my adherents, and accident alone discovered it to us. I was once traversing a vast forest in the environs of Villa-Flora, in my way to my vessel, when stopping in a ruined tower, I ordered one of my crew to go down into a well in the centre of the ground-floor ; and having told me, when he ascended, that

he

he had found subterraneous passages, apparently of great extent, I determined to explore them, and discovered an immense cavern, branching out in different directions, formed, as I imagine, by the Christians at the time of the invasion by the Saracens. I have never been there since the period of my examination; but if you wish to visit the cavern, I will undertake to conduct you there in safety."

"Sebaldino's narrative," continued the marchesa, "completed my satisfaction in thus securing the means of realizing my projects: and my emissaries having soon afterwards gratified me with the tidings that you were at Paris, and on the point of espousing a young lady of condition, I resolved to involve her in your punishment——"

"How, monster!" interrupted I, "could  
not

not the innocence and virtues of Clementia,  
this—'

' Silence!' replied she, in an imperious tone, ' and hear what farther I have to say. As I was prevented from returning to Paris, Sebaldino hurried thither without delay, and having easily found means to corrupt Juliet, one of the attendants upon Clementia de Montval, she administered poison to your father, who died without any suspicion being attached to her. Satisfied with the fortunate commencement of my vengeance, I arrived in Portugal, with Otho, the friend and lieutenant of Sebaldino, with the intention of perfecting my work. With his assistance I examined the subterraneous passages, and finding that they communicated with the chapel of Ville-Flore, I made some arrangements

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in the cavern, and became a member of the community of Santa Maria, where I soon afterwards buried the abbess to her grave; and by dint of money caused myself to be chosen in her stead. The moment for the execution of my project at last arrived. Juliet, who was devoted to Seboldino, and who was flattered by the promise of an immense reward, gave you a potion, whose effect has corresponded with our intentions. Last night, accompanied by the count, I visited the chapel of Villa-Floa; and assisted by Juliet, conveyed you from your sumptuous mausoleum to this vault, where you are absolutely in my power. But you are not yet acquainted with the whole of my designs. Clementia will soon receive a forged letter from her brother which,

which, I hope, will determine her to travel into France, and Sebalino will pursue her, and secretly convey her to the cavern. He will take advantage of that opportunity to acknowledge the services of Juliet, by stabbing her to the heart, for it is thus one ought to destroy a vile instrument, that becomes dangerous as soon as it ceases to be necessary. I might indeed have retained her in my service, and employed the same practices about Clementia as succeeded so admirably with yourself; but I apprehended that two such precipitate deaths might occasion unpleasant inquiries, and I preferred the method I have just mentioned. With respect to donna Lucia and your daughter, I consent that they should live; but they must quit the interior

terior of the Castle, of which I choose to have the disposal; and with the view of compelling your sister to shut the gates of the courts, and to inhabit the pavilions, I intend to terrify her by nightly phantoms, and by an accumulation of prodigies and apparitions. Leontio, I have now avowed my crimes—I repent, of none of them—nor are they the last I will commit. Farewell! Blame only yourself for driving me to these extremities. Soon, perfidious wretch! you shall hear of me again—and tremble at my wrath!

"A hideous expression of triumph overspread her countenance as she retired, and overwhelmed me with horror at conduct so atrocious.

"The gay sister Perpetua, who had first accompanied her, and who was little

less

less inhuman than herself, now returned with some provisions, of which she ever treated me to partake, and informed me that the abbess enjoyed in the world a high character for sanctity and virtue, under the appellation of Theresa, which she had adopted on her entrance into the convent. — — — — —

"Whilst she was speaking, several men, whose ferocious aspect marked them for the companions of Sebaldino, entered my cell, loaded with different articles of furniture, which they deposited according to the directions of Perpetua, with whom they afterwards retired.

"As I soon found that every precaution was taken to prevent my escape, I gave up the idea of attempting it, that had at first occurred; and as Perpetua was daily accompanied by one of Sebaldino's

dino's crew, when she brought me my provisions, I could neither endeavour to soften her by promises, nor force her to liberate me by menaces.

" After a considerable period had elapsed, the abbess reappeared.—'I now begin to feel satisfied,' she said; 'every thing has succeeded to my wishes. Donna Lucia and her niece are withdrawn to the pavilions; Clementia is here; and her sentence—'

' Execrable woman!' I exclaimed; ' forbear to lay your perfidious hands upon one of God's most perfect creatures! Shudder at spilling the blood of innocence and of virtue! If you want still more to satiate your sanguinary thirst, why not shed the blood of him who you say has so mortally offended you? I have roused your anger—I have provoked

voked your wrath—let it then fall wholly upon me! make haste and let me perish, but, in the name of Heaven, and of every thing that is most sacred, if yet there be aught sacred in your eyes, spare, I conjure you, my wife, my Clementia!—have mercy upon her, who can never have offended you!"

" You speak with eloquence and sensibility," replied the monster, coldly; " but your discourse has lost the power of persuasion over my heart—on the contrary, your sufferings but increase my satisfaction—your agony but adds to my enjoyment, and your despair delights me beyond expression."

" By loading her with imprecations and abuse, and reproaching her with every vice that my imagination could suggest, I now endeavoured to provoke  
her

her to take away a life that was become odious to me; but that unfeeling monster left me without exhibiting the slightest symptoms of passion.

" I continued to suffer the most cruel tortures of the mind. I knew that Clementia was near me---I knew that she was going to be sacrificed; my despair was at its height---but thou, oh God! didst then inspire me with courage to resist misfortune, and not to make an attempt upon my life.

" At length Perpetua, whose heart was not quite so callous and as cruel as that of the execrable abbot, took compassion upon me, and in a low voice told me not to distress myself so much---that Clementia was alive, and in a cell very near my own---that it was not Theresa's intention to destroy her, but that I must

appear to be persuaded of her death, lest Perpetua should be suspected of undeeiving me.

" When the lay sister had left me, I threw myself upon my knees, and besought the Almighty to watch over my innocent wife, Amelina, and donna Lucia ; my heart was almost broken when I thought that I was no more to see those objects of my tenderness ; I wept, I sighed with bitterness, and even the aids of reason and religion were powerless against the agony of my grief."

" Sixteen years elapsed without producing any change in my situation, except that Perpetua occasionally conveyed messages between Clementia and myself, which considerably diminished our distress. She also informed me that my sister and daughter sometimes heard

mass at Santa Maria, and that Amelina was every thing that could be wished. Oh, how my heart longed to behold her but for an instant ! I would willingly have purchased such happiness with my blood.

" I discovered also that Theresa carried on an infamous intrigue with Sebaldino, and that the cavern served as an asylum for the banditti, who there deposited the treasures they acquired by their piracies and other villanies.

" The vindictive Sicilian seldom came near me ; satisfied with detaining us as her prisoners, she seemed to have abandoned the rest of her vile projects. During several years the lay sister had come unattended to my cell, from the persuasion that I had neither the power nor the intention to assault her, and having

one day told me that the abbess was so ill as to be confined to her bed, I threw myself at her feet, and so forcibly straitened her to conduct me to Clementia, that she at last consented, upon condition that I would swear not to remain there beyond the time she should prescribe. She then prepared Clementia for my visit, and opening my door, conducted me into a cell immediately opposite to my own.

"I will not attempt to describe our emotions at meeting, after such a long and painful separation; but, oh Heaven! how shall I portray the alteration in the features of my Clementia? Time, grief, and lamentations, had totally destroyed her beauty--the most charming work of the Creator could have been perceived by no one but a sincere and

faithful

faithful lover; instead of the freshness and colour of the rose, her pale and hollow cheeks bore the impression of affliction—her eyes, formerly beaming with sensibility, now sank and without lustre, were totally destitute of expression—her lips were livid, and she more resembled a corpse than a living creature. These cruel ravages, caused by unmerited ill-treatment, pierced my very soul—but how did they renew and increase my affection!—with what melancholy pleasure did I cover with kisses these mournful testimonies of misfortune!

“ Perpetua allowed us to enjoy but a short time the happiness we felt; but as she promised to facilitate our interviews, that hope enabled us the better to submit to the separation; and the perform-

ance of her promise extended so far as to suffer us to see each other daily.

" At first she quitted us but for a moment, but gradually accustoming herself to leave us, she at length allowed us to pass several days together in the same cell.

" It has been said with truth, that when two people love each other tenderly and sincerely, every place and situation are alike in their eyes. Clementina and myself no longer felt that we inhabited a prison, that was probably intended to be our grave; the magic power of love had transformed our dungeon into a palace, and we abandoned ourselves to the raptures of our passion with as much eagerness as in the season of our prosperity. If we had not been separated

rated from our Amelina and donna Lucia, we should have forgotten that we were numbered amongst the dead.

" When the abbess was recovered from her illness, Perpetua told us that we must no longer see each other so frequently ; and, cruel as was the privation, we felt the necessity of submitting to it.

" I now began to be exceedingly uneasy, for Clementia was pregnant, and I foresaw that her delivery would discover our connexion, and expose us to the resentment of the abbess. I therefore disclosed the secret to Perpetua, and so alarmed her, by making her perceive that the fury of our enemy would fall equally upon her, that she proposed to favour our escape, if we thought proper.

" I was one evening sitting with Clementia and the lay sister, when the

former was seized with pains that denoted a more early delivery than we expected, and they increased so as to leave no doubt of her being quickly relieved from her burthen.

"We are all lost and undone!" cried Perpetua, in an agony. "The abbeess is this night to meet Sebaldino and his companions in the cavern, and should she come hither, as I suspect she will, we must all inevitably perish! Away, then! take this Katip—and when you have passed through an iron door, pursue the left-hand passage, that will conduct you into the chapel of Villa-Flora. As for me, I shall find means to justify myself from suspicion."

"Taking Clementia by the hand, we fled without loss of time, and considering the ills we had endured, we both

proceeded

proceeded with astonishing courage and dexterity, until at the end of a passage we were terrified at the sight of the abbess advancing towards us.

" Flying instantly in an opposite direction, we soon lost sight of her, and reached a vault almost filled with tombstones, which I concluded to be those of my progenitors." We then ascended a staircase, that led us into the chapel of Villa-Flora, when we hastened to the door, which we found closed.

" We next ascended into the belfry, and I made the bell resound three times; but at that moment my Clementia lay down upon the floor, and almost with-out an effort gave birth to an innocent creature, that was soon to be deprived of its existence."

" My courage was reanimated at this

interesting sight—I again pulled the bell, in hopes that donna Lucia would send her servants to inquire into the cause of a circumstance that must appear so extraordinary to the inhabitants of the pavilion; but no one coming to our assistance, I went down, and forced open the chapel-door; but hearing a dreadful outcry behind me, I turned round, and perceived the abbess, Sebal-dino, and Perpetua, followed by a troop of the banditti.

"The lay sister, in order to hide her participation in our flight, loaded me with imprecations, and joined in the clamours of that atrocious gang, who instantly came up with me, and seized me.

"They were conducting me through the chapel to the cavern, when the cries of the new-born infant having revealed

the

the asylum of the mother, Theresa flew up to the belfry, and ordered me to be dragged there after her.

"Upon our arrival a spectacle exhibited itself that seemed calculated to affect the minds of the most barbarous,—that of a mother in the pangs of childbirth. But, without being moved at such a sight, the feroeious abbess took the infant in her arms, examined it steadfastly for a moment, and then threw it out of the window of the belfry!"

Here Florello paused, in order to discourse with his friend about the astonishing adventure that had given them the key of those mysteries by which Amelina had been so seriously disquieted. Both were affected at the account of the misfortunes of Leontio and his

consort, and both expressed their indignation at the atrocious conduct of the vindictive and hypocritical Theresa; but, anxious to know the sequel, Edmund took the manuscript, and read the remainder of the contents.

"I feel not sufficient strength," continued the marquis, "to enter into the detail of all the horrible events that succeeded. The monster, whose name shall no longer defile my pen, forced me to write to donna Lucia, entreating her to do as she had been ordered. Alas! I was made to believe that the life of Clementia depended upon it. But that unhappy victim early yielded to such horrors, and survived her babe but a few hours. She expired, and I, I still am in existence!"

"I was

" I was soon taken extremely ill, and reduced to the very verge of the grave : but Heaven ordained that I should still suffer ; and upon my recovery I learned that donna Lucia had quitted Villa-Flora, and that my daughter Amelina was in the convent, in the power of my cruel and perfidious enemy.

" This was the last stroke she had reserved for me. I was then conveyed into the apartments in the Castle, upon my solemn promise not to endeavour to escape—and I will keep my word ; I no longer desire my liberty ; never will I leave the spot where reposes my lost Clementia ! Besides, if I escaped, my daughter would be sacrificed, for the wretch has sworn it. Oh God ! save, oh, save my daughter !

" Perpetua completely justified herself to

to her employer, and has preserved her influence with that demon.

" No one inhabits this Castle but myself—all is silent and deserted. Sometimes, in wandering over the silent and spacious rooms, I think; I hear the sound of steps—I fancy that I see the shades of Gonsalez, of Clementia, of my child; I shudder—I am terrified—I fly. I am frequently ordered to descend into my cell for a short time; these precautions testify the apprehensions of the guilty. The infamous wretch, whom, to my sorrow, I but too often see, now appears to shew some tokens of compassion; she seems even to have revived—what shall I term it?—certainly not love—but the criminal passion she formerly cherished for me, and concealed under that tender appellation, and which

she

she dared to assimilate to that pure and sacred flame, created and approved by the Divinity.

" I will now terminate these memoirs, and deposit them in some spot in which they may easily be discovered, if any stranger should penetrate into these regions, where every thing bears the seal of desolation. I believe I have omitted none of the material circumstances of my sad history, though, as all my faculties are enfeebled, it is possible that some incidents may have escaped me\*.

" I have

\* It is here necessary to inform the reader that the abbess had contrived to intercept at Aveiro the letters that donna Lucia had written to the family of Montval, as mentioned by her in Vol. I. as well as the letters sent by that family into Portugal; and that, on the fatal night when the child of Clementia was thrown into the court, the abbess, desirous of discovering what the inhabitants

" I have but a little while to live, and I look forward to the moment of my dissolution as the greatest of blessings. If my dear daughter and sister should fortunately avoid the misfortunes that seem to pursue and attach themselves to my family, and if this melancholy history should fall into their hands, let me entreat them to execute my only and last request, which is, to erect a simple monument, with the following inscription:—

" To the memory of Clementia de Montreal, the most virtuous of wives, the tenderest of mothers, the most amiable of women. She was beautiful, modest,

sensible,

Habitants of the pavilions thought of the ringing of the bell, softly entered the apartment of Amelina, with Perpetua, but finding her apparently asleep, they retired, thinking they had not been perceived, and this accounts for Amelina's vision, noticed in Vol. I.

sensible, benevolent, and affectionate. She perished, the victim of consummate wickedness, after suffering innumerable torments.

"Otherwise to the memory of her husband, Leontio, marquis of Villa-Flora. He adored Clementina, but was the first cause of her misfortunes. The error of a moment occasioned the unhappiness that quitted him only in the tomb.  
"May this terrible example be a lesson to youth, and teach them not to submit to their passions!"

Edmund having finished the perusal of the manuscript, advised Lemos to find out donna Lucia, and engage her to throw herself at the feet of her sovereign, and implore his permission to unveil the conduct

conduct of the abbess. They concluded that the spectre-like figure seen by Amelina in the Castle must be the marquis her father, and they shuddered lest Theressa should avenge the flight of Florello and Amelina by the infliction of fresh tortures upon the marquis.

As soon as the travellers arrived at Lisbon, they repaired to the palace of Almeida, and were informed that the duke was in the country. But when Edmund had named himself to the porter, he gave him a letter that had been entrusted to him.

It proved to be from the marchioness de Verbanes, who acquainted her son that she was in a place of safety, and that measures were taking to procure an order for the grand inquisitor to drop the prosecution against them; but that

as much time must elapse before it could be obtained, she desired Edmund to quit Portugal with his cousin, and travel until he had her directions to return. She added, that the duke of Almeida's steward had received orders to conduct Amelina to her as soon as she should appear at the palace, and that Casadoro, the banker at Lisbon, would give Edmund an hundred moidores upon his draft.

Florello was deeply afflicted by this letter. Amelina had not been heard of—there were no tidings of Augusto—and not knowing what means to employ for the discovery of donna Lucia, he was cruelly perplexed as to what course he should adopt.

"All we can do," said Edmund, "is to arm ourselves with patience, and stay at

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at Lisbon a few days ; for as our adventures cannot yet be blazed about, we run no risk in continuing here. I am persuaded that we shall not be long without seeing Amelina ; there are so many delays in travelling, that it is scarcely possible she should arrive so soon. With respect to donna Lucia, it appears unnecessary to seek her at present, and we should certainly expose ourselves to danger, if we busied ourselves in inquiring after her at this particular moment."

Edmund, who, by his wise counsels and tender consolations, wished to pour balm into the distressed mind of his friend, endeavoured also to divert his thoughts by all the attentions in his power. Every day he inquired if Amelina had arrived at the palace of Almeida?

—but

—but he every day returned with the same answer. He was in some measure comforted indeed by the persuasion that as his faithful Augusto had not appeared at Lisbon, he had met with Amelina, and was accompanying her to the capital.

Forced to invent a thousand pretexts, that might seem plausible in the eyes of his unhappy friend, Edmund's task was difficult and disheartening; he in vain conducted Florello to the play, the bull-fights, and the public walks, grief and weariness everywhere accompanied him, and if he withheld his lamentations, and suppressed his sighs, it was out of regard to the feelings of a friend, whose attentions were so unceasing and so affectionate.

At length Edmund returned one morning with a letter for Florello, who,  
recognising

recognising the handwriting of Amélie, instantly tore it open, and read the following lines :—

“ *On board the Intrepid, at sea.*

“ What terrors you must have undergone, my friend ! But calm your apprehensions—nothing serious has happened to me. I am on board a vessel, ready to sail from the Portuguese coast, and am ignorant of the length of the voyage; but I conjure you to depart for Paris, and to find out the family of Montval. Sooner or later I will join you there. Adieu ! you are dearer to me than my life.

“ OCTAVIO.”

Florello was transported at this intelligence ;

ligence; he repeatedly kissed with rapture the handwriting of his beloved Amelina; he walked to and fro, and talked so incoherently as to prove the excess of his satisfaction.—“Let us go, my friend,” said he, “let us instantly depart for Paris—it is there that I shall find her! Let us delay not a moment! let us hasten from a country where we shall see nothing but the fires of the Inquisition! Oh, Heaven! she exists—I shall see her once more—I shall again be able to tell her how I adore her!”

“Yes, my friend,” cried Edmund, “we must go directly! I saw yesterday in the Tagus a vessel that was to sail this very day for Bourdeaux; and whilst you go and secure a passage to that port, I will write to my mother, as well to inform her of our project, as to request that

that she would forward me a draft for some money to Bourdeaux."

Florella, whose hopes went greatly revived, repaired instantly to the port of Lisbon; and having made his arrangements with the captain, returned to Edmund, who had finished the letter to his mother; then packing up their baggage they went on board the vessel, and a fair wind wafting them out of the river, they proceeded on their voyage to Bourdeaux.

## **CHAPTER V.**

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**WHILST** the two friends, animated by the hope of soon finding the cherished object of their researches, are prosperously sailing towards the coast of Guienne, let us return to Amelina, whom we left in a most perilous situation.

When she heard the banditti upon the stairs, she thought that her last moment was arrived, and recommending herself to God, awaited, with as much fortitude as is natural to humanity, the termination of her misfortunes.

“ By Lucifer !” exclaimed Sebaldino,

when he had cast his eyes around the room, “ here’s a fine subject for our alarms ! who would think that such a stripling should occasion them ?”

Whilst the pirates looked at each other with astonishment, Albert advancing, cried out that he would punish the author of the disturbance, and seizing Amelina by the hair, prepared, with uplifted sabre, to execute his threats ; but one of the gang seized the ruffian’s arm, and Sebaldino ordered Albert to desist.

“ How ! ” answered she, “ you would not have me practise the lessons you have been giving me ? ”

“ Body of me, lieutenant ! ” cried Sebaldino, in a thundering voice, “ answer me once more at your peril ! Antonio, you did well to seize the arm of Albert — I applaud you for it.” Then addressing

oing

ing himself to Amelina.—“Who art thou?” he said, “and what brings thee here?”

“ Segnor,” she replied, almost breathless with apprehension, “ my name is Octavio, and I am a native of Coimbra. On my return from a distant village, and passing through this forest, my horse startled and threw me, and galloped off so speedily, that it would have been useless to attempt to overtake it. Besides, I was so hurt by the fall, that I could scarcely move; but endeavouring to crawl out of the forest, I lost my way, and reached this tower, where I intended to remain until to-morrow, being quite overcome by fatigue. This is the exact truth, segnor: you have saved my life—be kind enough also to liberate me. I beseech you to let me re-

turn to my father's; and be assured that nobody shall ever know——”

“ Hold there, my little Octavio,” interrupted Sebaldino. “ Though I preserved your life, may I be crucified if I suffer you to quit us! Hark ye, my friend—we shall leave this country tomorrow, in quest of adventures and battles by sea; you shall accompany us, and make your first proofs of valour under my banners; and if you behave well, and I have reason to be satisfied with you, I will give you a post on board my ship, and you shall share the booty. Blood and thunder! surely that must give you pleasure! You must undoubtedly find this arrangement more agreeable than the fate prepared for you by Albert.”

The pretended Octavio, aware of the

danger

danger of irritating the ferocious Sebaldino by a refusal, answered in terms that were applauded by the captain and his troop; and Sebaldino embracing him, girded a sabre round his waist, and proclaimed that he admitted him amongst the number of those who were attached to his person and fortune; after which, the ruffians surrounding their new comrade, gave him the fraternal embrace, and swore to aid and succour him as a brother.

"Come, my lads," said Sebaldino, "let us return to our wine; we must celebrate in bumpers the acquisition of Octavio."

Amelina, whose hunger was excessive, almost forgot the company she was in, and thought of nothing but satisfying her appetite.

"By Lucifer!" said the captain, "it would indeed have been cruel to have deprived you of your supper, for you eat like five-and-twenty devils; but that is as it should be. Come, Octavio, I drink to your future glory—and do you follow my example?"

"And I drink to the glory you have acquired—Long live the brave and victorious Sebaldino!"

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the russians, brandishing their glasses, and drinking to the prosperity of their new colleague.

"Comrades," resumed Sebaldino, "I have furnished Octavio with a sabre; I yield to you the satisfaction of arming him completely."

"Here," said Albert, taking a pair of pistols out of his girdle, "just now I would

would have taken away your life—there are the means of preserving it."

The banditti were loud in their approbations of Albert's generosity, and soon completed the equipment; so that Amelina was provided with every thing necessary for the new situation which necessity and self-preservation had forced her to adopt. When almost all the bottles were emptied, Sebaldino, wrapping himself in his cloak, stretched himself at his length on the pavement, and presently was in a profound sleep. All his troop, except one who was posted as sentinel at the door, followed his example; and Amelina, perceiving the impossibility of escaping, resolved to resign herself to her fate, and endeavour to recruit herself by sleep.

As soon as the day began to break, the

whole party was in motion. Sebaldino, with Octavio by his side, preceded, and Albert closed the march, to prevent any of the ruffians from deserting. At noon they stopped in a wood to repose, and to consume the remainder of their provisions, and in the evening reached the coast, where Sebaldino making a signal to a vessel at anchor about a mile from the shore, a boat immediately put off, for the conveyance of the captain and his crew.

Whilst the boat approached, Amelina cast a melancholy look upon the scenery that surrounded her. The ocean formed a deep bay, nearly encompassed by lofty and craggy rocks, against whose sides the waves broke with a terrifying noise and impetuosity ; thickly-tufted trees grew on the summits of the rocks, and balanced

their

their flexible branches in the air; and the agitation of the leaves, added to the sound of the waters, increased the solemnity of this wild and melancholy scenery.

The boat being arrived, Sebaldino jumped into it, and was followed by his associates with alacrity; but Amelina, who had never been upon the sea, and who saw herself constrained to quit her natal country, without being able to give any intelligence to Florello, and without a probable prospect of returning, with difficulty prevented her tears from betraying the emotions of her heart.

Evening was already far advanced when they arrived on board the Intrepid.

—“My brave Otho,” said Sebaldino, “here we are at last; and I bring you a new comrade, who joined us yesterday,

and with whom I hope we shall be satisfied. Here, Octavio, this is the valiant Otho, my first lieutenant, who, I hope, will receive you into his favour."

Otho seemed extremely pleased with the appearance and manners of the stranger; and when the rest of the pirates had congratulated their captain on his return, he recommended Octavio to their good offices—"We shall set sail directly," continued he, "and I shall steer for the southern part of the French coast, where I hope our cruise will be successful."

"We cannot sail before to-morrow morning," said Otho, "for our biscuit is not yet on board, and we are not to have it till to-morrow."

"Very well," replied Sobaldino, "Do you,

you, Antonio, go ashore for the biscuit early in the morning, and we will sail the moment you come back."

When Amelina retired to the cabin that was allotted to her, she reflected on the method of withdrawing from the execrable gang with which she felt with horror that she was associated, and she relieved her mind by thinking that the cruise on the French coast might afford her an opportunity of escaping—"In which case," said she, "my money and jewels, which I have so providentially preserved, will enable me to go to Paris, where I shall perhaps hear something of the family of Montval." But she was more particularly uneasy about Florelle; and having pictured to herself all the anxiety of that amiable youth, her affliction increased on finding herself ut-

terly at a loss to give him any tidings of her situation.

Whilst she was thus a prey to grief and vexation, Antonio, who had saved her life in the tower by seizing the arm of Albert, came into her cabin, and whispered the following consolatory words :—

“ You have inspired me with the sincerest friendship—your situation interests me, and I would readily set you at liberty, and accompany you in your flight; but that is wholly impossible at present. As your family must be very uneasy about you, you had better write to them, and I will take care and put the letter into the post-office, for I am going ashore for biscuit; but you must write directly. Take care not to mention that you are with pirates—and only say

say enough to satisfy them that you are alive. Here are the materials for writing—be quick, for the boat is ready to put off."

The pretended Octavio having immediately written the note, gave it to Antonio, who, as we have seen in the last chapter, punctually performed his promise, and on whose return with the biscuit, Sebaldino weighed anchor; and Amelina presently, and with sorrow, lost sight of her native shores.

As soon as the vessel entered the Mediterranean, Sebaldino steered along the coast of Africa, and then sailed towards the island of Corsica, from the heights of which he shaped his course for Provence.

The most desirable winds had hitherto favoured the navigation, and Amelina saw

saw with satisfaction that no obstacle impeded her approach to the coast where, she flattered herself, she should be delivered from her bondage. Under the appellation of Octavia, she had gained the good opinion of the crew; and the captain had honoured her with his confidence, so far as to mention all his intrigues with the execrable abbess of Santa Maria. But it was with difficulty that she withheld her indignation on becoming acquainted with many of the transactions related in the memoirs of Leontio, by the organ of the very monster who had so cruelly and materially contributed to the disasters of her family. These reigned, however, so much obscurity in the account given by Sebaldino, that she concluded her father and mother had both fallen victims to oppression; and

in this position she could scarcely help accusing Providence of injustice; whilst she checked the tears that were constantly ready to flow down her cheeks. Under the absolute necessity of dissimulating, and of confuting her detestation and affliction within her bosom, she was equally constrained to applaud the doings of him who had woven the tissue of his misfortunes ; and nothing but the hope of soon escaping from such a wretch was capable of curbing the explosion of her hatred, and the impetuous passions that arose within her mind.

As she was one morning seated upon the deck, with her eyes eagerly turned towards the coast where she expected to recover her liberty, she perceived, at a great distance, a vessel that appeared to be in full sail for the Intrepid; and having

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ing' mentioned it to the captain, he had recourse to a telescope, and discovered a chebeck, with the Tunisian flag at the mast-head. Having communicated the intelligence to his crew, and given orders to prepare instantly for battle, the greatest hurry and confusion took place on board the vessel; the port-holes were opened, the cannon loaded, and every thing made ready for an engagement.

During the bustle, Antonio whispered the pretended Octavio that he saw how unpleasant was his situation, but that the first time they should go on shore, he would undertake to provide for his escape.

He had scarcely done speaking, when the corsair of Barbary, supposing that a vessel so much less than his own would not venture to oppose so superior a force,

fired

fired a gun over the Intrepid, as an order to surrender; but Sebaldino answered with a broadside, which was succeeded by a volley of fire-arms. Clouds of smoke now enveloped the vessels—death flew rapidly about in the midst of the fire and the report of the artillery; the pirates quickly grappled, and the conquest was decided by the sabre.

Amelina, whose imagination had been inflamed by Antonio's promise, saw no peril equal to that of falling into the power of the Africans, but undismayed by the cries of the combatants, the shrieks of the dying, and the imprecations of the wounded, she was the first to board the chebeck with a drawn sabre, and was instantly followed by Sebaldino, Albert, Otho, and others of the gang. The terrified Tunisians abandoning

ing their deck, were pursued in every direction; and as dreadful carnage took place, the captain of the chebeck alone dared to make any resistance to Sebaldino; but whilst he fought with the energy of despair, and the success of the contest seemed uncertain, Albert suddenly stepped behind him, and with a dagger stretched him at his feet.

The vessel was now completely in possession of Sebaldino, who commanded that the Tunisians should be chained together, and cast headlong into the sea; and this horrible execution being performed, he ordered the merchandise and treasure to be conveyed on board the Intrepid, together with some Spaniards, who had been captured by the corsair; after which the chebeck was set on fire, and soon afterwards blew up with

with a tremendous explosion, covering the sea, as it were, with the scattered parts of its blazing wreck.

The engagement had lasted nearly six hours, and the various arrangements that succeeded it had occupied a considerable time, after which a quantity of brandy was distributed amongst the crew of the Intrepid.

Whilst the pirates were carousing, and rejoicing at the success of their attack, Ameling went down into the hold to inquire into the situation of the Spanish prisoners, who had been shut up there.

"Ah, seignor!" said one of those unfortunate captives, "for God's sake allow an old man here to go upon the deck, or he will certainly die for want of air."

"Let him follow me," said Ameling,

As

As soon as they reached the deck, she recognized, to her infinite astonishment, the good old Gerardo, the faithful servant of donna Lucia.

"What is your name, friend?" said she, in Portuguese.

"I am called Gerardo, at your service, signor."

"Did you never live at the Castle of Villa-Flora, in the province of Beira?"

"At the Castle of Villa-Flora?" said the old man, attentively looking at the person he had concluded to be a man—"Yes, I did live there—but—pardon me, you are very like—"

"Gerardo—am I not very like Amelina?—I am indeed the niece of donna Lucia."

"Oh, my dear young lady! how happens it—"

"Silence!"

"Silence! or I shall be discovered;" but then conducting him on one side, she desired him to inform her about her aunt, and what had happened since her departure from the Castle.

"When I had left you at the convent," replied Gerardo, "I went to Aveiro, as the segnora had directed me; but instead of there finding orders to join her, as I had expected, I was commanded to remain there, and to take care that I was as little seen as possible. I was also directed to inform her of every thing I could learn relative to yourself; and as I lodged at the house of a friend who was intimate with Beatrix, one of the lay sisters at the convent, I became acquainted with every thing concerning your health and situation. The segnora having lately written to me to come to her at

Lisbon,

Lisbon, I embarked on board a Spanish tartan, bound from Aveiro for that port; but we were scarcely out of sight of land, before we were pursued and captured by a Barbary corsair, where I have remained a prisoner until now."

"My dear Gerardo," said Amelina, "I am obliged to leave you at present, but I will see you to-morrow, when I will acquaint you with the cause of my disguise, and you must give me the address of donna Lucia."

At this moment one of the crew advancing, roughly desired Octavio to follow him to the captain, who wanted to speak to him directly; and Gerardo going down into the hold, Octavio followed the messenger into the cabin of Sebaldino, whom she found smoking his pipe, with a very serious countenance, and

and surrounded by the greater part of his associates.

"Young man," said he, with a severe voice, "I am required to punish your treachery."

"Yes," said the envious Albert, "Octavio has formed some plot; I just now found him whispering with one of the Spanish prisoners, and I will answer for it, they were settling the plan of a conspiracy."

Octavio remaining silent—"Body of me!" cried Sebaldino, "your silence sufficiently convicts you. Comrades, are you of the same opinion?" Upon their unanimously exclaiming an affirmative—"What punishment shall I inflict upon him?" asked Sebaldino.

"Death!—death!" cried they.

"Death!" said he. "Be it so. Octavio,

cessary directions, but the sailors were all so much intoxicated as to be utterly incapable of working ; they executed Sebaldino's orders so imperfectly, as to augment the danger rather than diminish it ; their state of drunkenness, and the rolling of the vessel, caused them to fall down at every step, and several of them fell into the sea. The vehemence of the wind, the rolling of the thunder, the roaring of the tumultuous billows, the screams of the affrighted crew, the rattling of the sails and rigging, and the cracking of the vessel, that seemed every moment ready to go to pieces, all united to increase the horror of Amelina's situation. The near prospect of certain death, bearing so terrifying an aspect, would surely have appalled the stoutest and most intrepid heart.

At

At length the day, or rather a pale and feeble light, disclosed the imminence of the danger. The storm was now at its height; a thick fog encompassed the vessel, but being suddenly dissipated by a squall, the crew assembled upon the deck perceived with consternation a reef of rocks, upon which the ship was driving with rapidity. At this discovery they set up the most hideous yells, which were redoubled when they found that the Intrepid had sprung a leak, and that the water was fast gaining upon them, upon which Sebaldino ordering out the longboat and the skiff, the crew jumped into the former with such precipitation, that he deemed it unsafe to go into it, but hastened down into the skiff, followed by Otho, Antonio, and three others of the banditti, and left Amelina

and the Spanish prisoners to share the fate of the vessel.

The daughter of Leontio forgot her danger in the sort of joy she experienced on perceiving that all her execrable companions had quitted the ship ; she turned her eyes towards the skiff and the longboat, which at one moment appeared perched upon the summit of a monstrous wave, and at another seemed plunged into the deep abyss. The pirates who in the longboat rowed with all their might towards the coast, were suddenly upset near the reef, and totally lost. The skiff was concealed from Amelina by the retreat of the fog, but from the roughness of the sea and the fury of the wind, she concluded that Sebaldino and his companions had shared the same fate as their associates.

The

The Intrepid still kept driving toward the land; it dashed against a rock, and went immediately to pieces. The ill-fated captives sunk into a watery grave. Amelina alone escaped; chained to the mast, she floated along, and rose and fell with every wave. Some fishermen, who having seen the danger of the vessel, had hastened to the assistance of the crew, took her into their boat. She was in a state of insensibility, but they succeeded in recovering her. The good Gerardo, whose zeal and affection for his young protégée were above all praise, had perished. Amelina shed a torrent of tears. He had known and cherished her from her infancy.

Upon reaching the land, the fishermen conducted Amelina to an inn near the seashore, where she liberally rewarded

them for their great services, and was informed that she was at Cagnes, a small village near Antibes in Provence. Soon after she had retired to her chamber, an elegant carriage stopped at the door, and a gentleman, apparently sixty years of age, alighted, followed by a young lady, about seventeen, whom he called Selina, and who appeared to be his daughter.

Whilst the innkeeper accompanied the travellers to their apartments, he related to them, with the embellishments natural to one in his situation, the shipwreck and escape of the young stranger, and excited the curiosity and compassion of the gentleman, who desired to be introduced to him when he was recovered from his fatigue.

After some hours rest, Amelina arose considerably refreshed; and the inn-  
keeper

keeper having mentioned the inquiries and intended visit of the gentleman who had arrived whilst she was asleep, she thought it right to anticipate his intentions, and having been conducted to his room, she, after the usual complimentary speeches, gave him a short detail of her late adventures and escape, without however touching upon the subject of her sex.

"By your dress," said the gentleman, with an air of sympathy and kindness, "you are doubtless a Spaniard?" but upon Amelina's informing him that he was a Portuguese—"A Portuguese!" exclaimed he, eagerly—"I had formerly—You are a Portuguese then? I have a particular regard, sir, for your country. May I, without impropriety,

beg the favour of your name and province?"

"Octavio de Vellanès is my name; and Coimbra, in the province of Beira, is my natal place."

"Beira! Coimbra!" repeated the inquirer. "No, no—that is not the name. But be that as it may, it is impossible for me to express how much you interest me. Poor youth! how uneasy must your family be concerning you! After such a misfortune as a shipwreck, you must surely be in want of money?"

"True, sir," said Selina, hastily interrupting him. "Permit me to offer the unfortunate young man the purse of gold you gave me this morning?" and, without waiting for an answer, she ran to fetch it; but the supposed Octavio, in accents

accepts that expressed a full sense of her liberality and kindness, refused to accept it.

"I would have done so without hesitation, if circumstances had obliged me to it, but I have preserved a sum of money more than sufficient to carry me to my destination. Be not displeased that I deprive you of the pleasure you proposed to yourself—and may Heaven, that has given you both beauty and sensibility, bestow upon you the happiness you so justly merit!"

These words were followed by the tears of the young stranger. Selina with difficulty restrained from weeping, and her father seemed equally affected.

After a few moments of silence—  
"Pray," said he to Octavio, "what are

your projects, and do you intend to return to Portugal immediately?"

"No," answered Octavio; "I design to go to Paris, where I have hopes of finding a person about whom I am greatly interested."

"We shall be at Paris in three months," said Selina. "Stay with us until—"

"Stop," said her father; "I have a proposal to make, which, I trust, will be agreed to. Octavio, we are now travelling towards Italy, whither you must accompany us; our journey will not exceed three months, at the end of which I will take you to Paris, and shall hope to prevail upon you to establish yourself in my house."

"You do me infinite honour, sir, but I——"

"Why,

"Why, surely you would not have the cruelty to refuse me? I cannot think you would intentionally disoblige me?"

"No, indeed, sir, far from it—nor had I such a thought; but—"

"Come, come—no more objections, I beg. I have settled the whole matter in my mind; and so submit with a good grace to my irrevocable decree. To-morrow we will embark at Nice; if the wind should be favourable, we shall be at Genoa the day following—and so now all is settled."

"Yes," said Selina, with evident satisfaction, "yes, every thing is arranged; so, Octavio, you have nothing further to say against it. You shall see Italy with us; you certainly shall not quit us till we get to Paris—nor then neither for some time."

Almaire, unwilling to displease such amiable friends, bowed in token of assentation, though at the same time firmly resolved not to comply with the proposal. A sentiment of the tenderest nature attracted her to Paris, and nothing but circumstances of the most extraordinary kind and most imperious necessity could have induced her to alter her intentions.

When the storm had totally subsided, the sky resumed that almost continual serenity which prevails upon the coast of Provence; and on the following morning, Selina, to whose imagination Octavia had been present during the night, awaking at the dawn of day, arose, and determined to walk out. Climbing a hill, upon whose declivity stood the village of Cagnes, she seated herself under

an aged palm-tree near the Castle, and looked with admiration upon the beautiful prospect that gradually unfolded itself. The first rays of the sun gilded the tops of the majestic Alps; the eternal snow that covered them seemed to reflect the colours of the rainbow, and light clouds, tinged with rose-colour and white, hovered about the horizon. On one side Selina perceived a chain of hills clothed with mulberry and olive-trees; and innumerable villas were scattered over the eminences that arose in an amphitheatre to the foot of the highest mountains, whose aridity and barrenness presented a striking contrast to the fertility of the hills and plains.

On her left hand she discovered the river Var, hastening with rapidity towards the sea,—the flourishing port of

Nice,

" My fatigues were not so great as to require more than ordinary rest, and I forgot my misfortunes the moment I had the happiness of being acquainted with you."

" The Portuguese may well be called gallant," answered Selina; " assuredly it would be difficult to disguise such an assertion as yours under a more flattering mask."

" You perfectly mistake, my dear Selina, in thinking that I am desirous of imposing on you, or that I am given to flatter and deceive. I again assure you, most seriously, that the first sight of you inspired me with sentiments that will terminate only with my life. To love you, and to be beloved by you in return, is the earnest wish of my heart."

" Stop,

"Stop, sir!" interrupted Selina: "you forget yourself; you offend me in a manner I little expected, after——"

"I offend you!" said Amelina, opening her waistcoat; "look, Selina—tell me if the friendship and love of one of your own sex can possibly displease you?"

Selina made no reply; her confusion was extreme when she reflected that the charming Octavio, in whose favour her heart had been on the point of declaring itself, was not a young man—but a woman.

" My fatigues  
require more time.  
I forgot my money;  
had the best  
with you."

" T"

gall

The voyage of Edmund and Florella was prosperous and short, and a few days after their arrival at Bourdeaux the former received the following letter from his mother:—

" Why, alas ! my son, did I advise you to quit the kingdom ? Why did I not wait to see whether our affairs would take a more favourable turn ? The duke of Almeida, our sincere friend, as well as near relation, unwilling to flatter

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" I was with  
lina, when a courie.  
grand inquisitor's promise

the prosecution, and his sent.  
we were none of us guilty of the ch.  
imputed to us by our enemy the abbes.

" Upon arriving at Lisbon in order  
to impart to you these welcome tidings,  
I learned that you were embarked for  
Bourdeaux, and this intelligence greatly  
distressed me. But as our dear Florello  
stood in need of your consolation and  
assistance,

I hear where you are  
The mean' while, I enc  
hundred crusadoes  
ill let me know if

Aveiro must  
intieh con-  
it in us to  
& conse-

t Lis.

assistance, I ought not to regret your having accompanied him.

"Cherish with care, my children, the friendship which unites you, and which, in the bosom of adversity, has the power of scattering charms oyer all that it surrounds; it is the greatest blessing granted by the indulgence of the Creator, and can alone soften the several ills of life."

"Poor Augusto has been hindered from joining you by a very unpleasant circumstance; a few minutes after he quitted Villa-Flora, the alhazils perceived, followed, arrested, and conveyed him to the prisons of Aviira, where he now is; but I have procured an order for his release, and as soon as he is at large, will send him to you with a sum of

of money, when I hear where you are to be found. In the mean while, I enclose a draft for one hundred crusadoes upon Paris, and you will let me know if you want more.

" As our adventures at Aveiro must necessarily have occasioned much conversation, it would be indiscreet in us to reside there any longer. I have consequently hired a furnished house at Lisbon; and if, at your return, you should not be pleased with it, we can take another more suitable to your ideas.

" Al, my dear Edmund! when will the happy moment arrive that I can press you to my arms? I ardently wish it may not be deferred! I am old—death approaches with hasty strides—Let me at least have the consolation of expiring in the arms of my good, my beloved

beloved child, and of giving him my maternal benediction. Pardon me, my dear Edmund!—this picture will doubtless cause your tears to flow—your heart will be oppressed. Let us quit these melancholy subjects.

“ I am at a loss to imagine how the tender Amelina has avoided her cruel and wicked persecutors, and I still less understand how she has contrived to escape into France. The style of her letter to Florello is exceedingly obscure. There is certainly some mystery attached to it, but it is useless for me to endeavour to unravel it.

“ Farewell, my Edmund!—farewell, my dear Florello! This letter is common to you both; you are both the beloved children of my heart. Continue always to love me—conduct yourselves with prudence,

prudence, and be happy ! Such is the most sincere as well as ardent wish of your fond mother,

“ DONNA AMBROSIA DE VELLANES.”

---

The tenderhearted Edmund kissed with transport the handwriting of his adored and excellent parent. With tears of sensibility he reperused the letter, that at each sentence abounded with maternal love. The mournful reflections of his mother penetrated his soul ; he could not bear the terrible idea of being for ever separated from her.

As it seemed necessary for Edmund to repair to Paris, in order to present his draft for acceptance, he travelled thither as a courier on horseback, whilst Florello took a place in the diligence, where

where he met with a young Frenchman of genteel appearance and manners, whose conversation rewarded him for the vulgarity and absurd discourse of the rest of the passengers.

During the first day's journey, Florello mentioned his never having been at Paris, and that he supposed he should find some difficulty in meeting with those of whom he was in search.

"That is much easier than you imagine," replied the young man, "especially if they are persons of quality. May I without impropriety ask their names?"

"It is the family of the count of Montval," answered Florello.

"Montval, did you say? The count of Montval? Is it possible?"

"Yes," replied the astonished Florello,

"it

"it is the count of Montval of whom I am in search."

"Ah, sir, forgive my exclamation. I could not hear that name without emotion. I assure you, that whatever may be your business with the count, you will find him ready and desirous of obliging you. Nothing stops him in cases where he can make himself of use. He is in truth the most worthy and respectable of men."

"But perhaps the gentleman of whom you speak so highly is not the same as I mentioned to you; and, to say the truth, I am not imperfectly sure of his being alive."

"If you would condescend to tell me some particulars about the family you are in search of, I shall perhaps be able to inform you."

"About nineteen or twenty years since, the family of Montval consisted of the count, far advanced in years—of the chevalier, his son—and of two daughters, one of whom married a Portuguese nobleman, and the other soon after disappeared, and has never since been heard of—"

"That settles it at once," interrupted the Frenchman; "it is to that very family that I am under such essential obligations. The old count died long since, and was succeeded in title and fortune by his son, who is no longer young; and as no tidings have been for many years received of his sisters, it is conjectured that they are dead."

"Is monsieur De Montval particularly known to you?" said Florello.

"Most certainly; I have very particular

cular reasons for loving and respecting him, as you will find, when I relate to you the short history of my life, which I will do when we retire for the evening."

When they were separated from their fellow-travellers, the French youth thus related his adventures :—

" My birth is far from being illustrious : my father, whose name is Hugot, is the honest host of a small inn at Etampes, where he is generally known by the name of master Hilary. There is scarcely any body within twenty miles that knows not master Hilary, and his wife Jacqueline, with their pretty daughter Gertrude ; for though in an humble station, they enjoy an unblemished reputation and the esteem of the whole country.

" The old count of Montval used frequently to come to a country-house, of which he was particularly fond, in the neighbourhood of Etampes. I know not how it was, but my father soon gained the count's good-will, and when I was born, the chevalier offered to be my god-father, which was gratefully accepted by my parents, and I was baptized by the name of Casimir.

" As soon as I was weaned, the chevalier, then become count of Montval, received me into his house, where I was brought up and educated with all possible care and attention; and when I had entered my eighteenth year, the count told me that a captain of a ship, his intimate friend, and a very worthy man, was about to sail for the West-Indies; that if I would undertake the voyage,

he

he would give me a sufficient sum of money to trade with; and that, when I had enriched myself, I might return and share my fortune with my family.

"Availing myself of this generous offer, and of the advice of the friendly captain, I succeeded beyond my expectations, and lately resolved on returning to France, and surprising both the count and my parents with the wealth I have obtained, which I am sure greatly exceeds their hopes.

"Judge of my satisfaction upon seeing a family from whom I have been eight years separated, and to whose happiness and comfort I can now so materially contribute. Judge too of my delight when I can kiss the protecting hand to whom I am indebted for my success. Surely there is no happiness

superior to that which is in store for me!"

"I fully enter into your feelings and ideas," said Florello, with a sigh. "Alas! why cannot I look forward to so flattering a prospect? But no! that sweet hope is prohibited me! Ah, your cheering situation forms a mournful contrast with my melancholy one!"

Casimir, affected by the pathetic tone and words of his fellow-traveller, took that opportunity of entreating his confidence, and addressed him in terms so persuasive and so pathetic, that Florello was unable to resist the desire of acquainting him with his misfortunes: he therefore communicated to him, without disguise, not only his own history and adventures, but those of the unfortunate Leontio and his family.

"Sir,"

“Sir,” said the son of master Hilary, “it is impossible for me to express how much I am interested by the account you have given me. Henceforward let me devote myself to your service, in which I flatter myself I may be of use to you. If, as you think likely, the young lady you have mentioned is at monsieur De Montval’s, you need be under no sort of uneasiness—the count will certainly have for her the attention and tenderness of a father.”

“Do you intend going immediately to the count’s?” said Florello.

“It will be my first object, as soon as I have embraced my family; and if I might be allowed, I would propose to you to witness the meeting of a child with parents who by no means expect

so soon to see him. After having passed a day with them, we would go directly to Paris, so that you would be delayed but for an instant, and on arriving at Paris, we would inquire at the hotel of Montval about the object of your researches."

"Willingly, very willingly !—you could not make me a more acceptable proposal. A day longer cannot make any material difference; and how shall I rejoice at the delay, if you at last contribute to restore to me the dear and cherished object of my affections!"

Whilst the travellers in the diligence continued their journey, Edmund safely reached the capital of France; and in three days afterwards Florello hastily entered his apartment. His face was pale

pale and harassed, and horror and consternation were strongly depicted upon his countenance.

"For God's sake, what has happened, my dear friend?" said Edmund. "What a change in your manner and appearance! Hasten, I conjure you, to relieve me from my anxiety, and tell me what has occurred to make you so unhappy?"

"Ah!" said Florello, mournfully, "why did we separate? Good God! couldst thou permit—But listen to me, my dear Edmund—listen and shudder at what you hear!"

After having related his meeting and conversation with Casimir, in the manner as has been already mentioned, he thus continued his narration:—

" I had promised Casimir to lodge at his father's, and to pass a day with him at Etampes; and before we arrived there he said, that as it would be late before we reached the town, he wished to enjoy the pleasure of passing one night under his father's roof without being known, and that as he had had the small-pox since he quitted France, he had no fear of being discovered; but that he would in the evening go and see one of his uncles, to whom he was much attached, and engage him to come early the next morning, to be present at the joyous meeting.

" Having agreed to his request, he desired me to take charge of a weighty purse of gold, which he destined for his father, but which, out of delicacy, he wished

wished me to find the means of giving to him.

“ Upon our arrival at Etampes, I was conducted to the inn of master Hilary, whilst Casimir visited his uncle. The inn was an isolated house, surrounded by gardens, and of an appearance by no means inviting; and upon my inquiring for a two-bedded room, I was answered in a surly tone, by a woman, whom I concluded to be Jacqueline, the mother of my fellow-traveller, that she had no such room to give me, but that I might have two single-bedded ones, not far distant from each other, if I chose it.

“ Although she spoke in a very uncivil manner, and measured me from head to foot during our discourse, I agreed to take the rooms, from regard to

to the feelings and intentions of Casimir, who soon after joined me.

'It is quite impossible,' he said, 'to paint the emotion I experience at finding myself again in my paternal dwelling. I have just spoken to my father and mother, and am astonished that my embarrassed voice did not betray me. I was twenty times on the point of throwing myself into their arms, and telling them that I was their son, and come to make them happy. I had the courage, however, to repress the sensations that agitated me, and preferred delaying for some hours the enjoyment prepared for me, in the hope of feeling it to its full extent. And my sister—my little Gertrude! how interesting she is—how tall and well made! She wants nothing but a husband, and I will take and find her one.'

one. Ah, sir ! if you knew with what tenderness I have been received by the good Martin Billot, my uncle ! Poor man ! he almost overwhelmed me with caresses, and it was with difficulty that he would suffer me to come here to-night. He has promised, however, to be here to-morrow morning at day-break, with several other relations, to whom he will announce my arrival. Forgive my fatiguing you with these trifling details ; you are so good, that I have not hesitated to give myself up to those feelings which my heart no longer could retain.'

' My good Casimir,' I answered, ' I must be insensible indeed if the picture of your filial piety had no effect upon me. Continue to yield to the pure joy  
that

that you feel ; it is a consoling balm to my wounded mind, although it has no direct influence upon my affections.'

" As soon as we had supped, I took the purse I had received from Casimir, and calling master Hilary aside, told him, that intending to pass the following day at Etampes, I wished him to lock up the purse, which was too heavy to carry about, and which I was sure would be safe in his custody.

" He received it with many respectful bows, and assurances that I could not have judged better, and that the money would be as secure as in my own hands.

" There seemed to be no other travellers in the house, and as Gertrude was the only servant in it, I concluded it to be

be very little resorted to. After supper we retired to our bedchambers, upon the first floor, each of which was at either end of a long passage, connecting with several other apartments.

" My room was excessively dirty, and hung with tattered tapestry : every thing was in confusion ; the window by no means shut close—several of the panes were broken ; a wormeaten chair, a wretched bed, and a bit of discoloured looking-glass, completed this picture of desolation.

" It was not without reluctance that I stretched myself upon the bed ; but soon afterwards finding myself thirsty, I rang a little bell, that stood by my bedside, and desired Gertrude to bring me a glass of water.

" She had scarcely brought it, and left  
the

the room, before I heard a footstep in the passage, and presently distinguished the noise of irons near my door. Uneasy at this occurrence, and anxious to inquire into the cause, I seized the candle, which fortunately had not been extinguished, and went to the door, when, to my surprise, I found it impossible to open it, and discovered that it was strongly bolted and barricadoed from without; and I became still more alarmed on perceiving that the door had neither lock nor bolt withinside.

"Thinking, however, that I could have nothing to apprehend in the house of Casimir's father, and that it might be the custom of the inn to bolt the bedroom doors, I returned towards my bed, but in my hurry dropped my handkerchief, and on picking it up, judge, my friend,

friend, of my consternation—I found it stained with blood, and the floor as red and moist as if blood had been lately spilt there in great quantity!"

**END OF VOL. II.**

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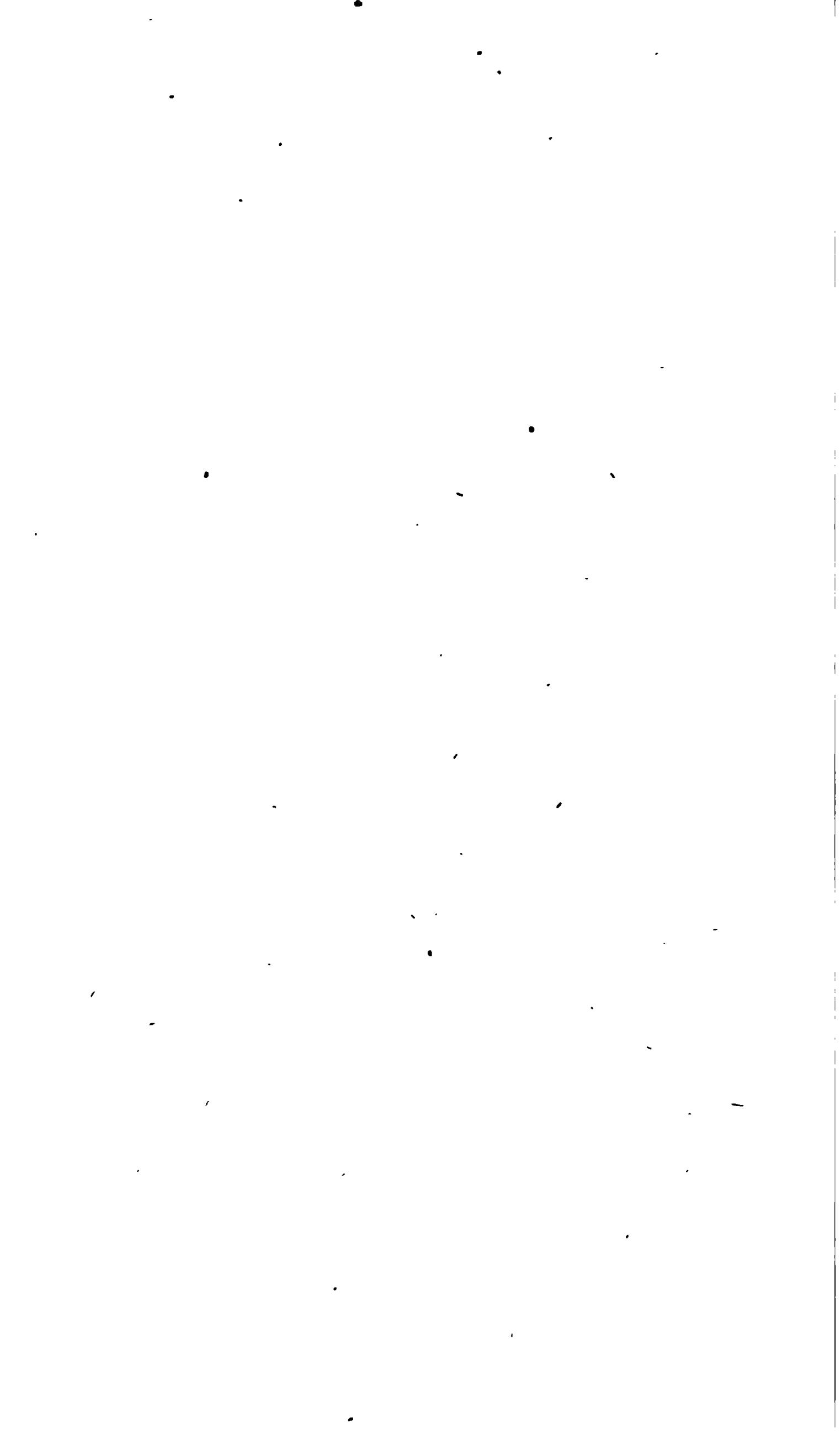
# **CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.**

**A TALE.**

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**Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.**

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THE  
**CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.**

**A Portuguese Tale,**

**FROM A MANUSCRIPT LATELY FOUND BY A BRITISH OFFICER  
OF RANK IN AN OLD MANSION IN PORTUGAL.**

---

**IN THREE VOLUMES.**

---

Not e'en the soldier's fury, rais'd in war,  
The rage of tyrants, when defiance stings 'em,  
The pride of priests, so bloody when in power,  
Are half so dreadful as a woman's vengeance.

**SAVAGE.**

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**VOL. III.**

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**1819.**



THE

# *Castle of Villa-Flora.*

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## CHAPTER I.

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“ MOTIONLESS with terror,” continued Florello, “ I was at first on the point of crying out, but reflection checked me in the outset; a thousand alarming thoughts occurred to my mind, and my breath was, as it were, suspended by apprehension. Shuddering at the danger I incurred, unarmed and defenceless as I was, certain of being in the dwelling

**2        CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.**

of an assassin, and even doubting whether Casimir had not inveigled me to the house for the purpose of taking away my life, I was assailed by every species of uncertainty. I however hastened to the window, and on opening it, found it impossible to escape that way, on account of the iron bars, that were too thick for me to wrench away ; and by the light of the moon I observed that the window looked into a court surrounded by a wall too high for me to climb over. My next idea was to endeavour to make my way towards Casimir, either to impart to him my danger and solicit his assistance, or to reproach him with his perfidy, if I should still have any reason to suspect him ; but all means of getting out of the chamber appeared to be cut off, and I began to think that

that I must peaceably resign myself to the knife of the assassin.

" At length, upon looking carefully under the tapestry, I found a small door, which, though locked, presently yielded to my efforts, and led into a very narrow passage, which I concluded to be parallel with the other in the front, and at the end of which I reached a staircase that I descended with precipitation. It conducted me into a spacious cellar, where I continued but a moment, for the earth in it had been newly dug up, and sent forth such a cadaverous and putrid stench, as persuaded me that the inn-keeper there deposited the dead bodies of his victims. Trembling at this horrid discovery, I reascended the steps, and perceiving a small door that I had before passed unobserved, I gently opened it,

and at the end of a passage saw a light through the crevices of a door which I approached, and looking through, distinguished master Hilary and his wife and daughter sitting round a table, apparently in deep deliberation. Although they spoke in a low voice, I heard every word of their discourse, which was as follows :

‘ Gertrude,’ said Hilary, ‘ are you sure you have bolted his door ?’

‘ Yes, yes, father, that I am ; so make yourself perfectly easy upon that subject.’

‘ I am sorry,’ said Jacqueline, ‘ that we are under the necessity of killing both of them ; I don’t know how it is, but the eldest certainly interests me considerably.’

‘ Yes,’ added Gertrude, ‘ I cannot say how much I feel for him.’

‘ Bah !

‘ Bah !’ said the father, ‘ you women have no more heart than a chicken ; but since you don’t like it, I will do the business alone. Do you hear what I say to you ?’

‘ You are wrong to put yourself in a passion, husband : what did I say to displease you ? It was more for talking’s sake than any thing else that I said so much ; and to prove to you that I am no more afraid of killing one than the other, I will help you to dispatch both of them ; and yet, if he had come alone, we might very well have let him go away safe and sound.’

‘ Why yes, Jacqueline, that we might, seeing that his purse does not appear very well stored ; but by my troth, since his comrade has been fool enough to trust me with his cash, they must both travel

the same road ; for you must plainly see that if we suffer one of them to live, he would make an outcry about his companion, all would come out, and then  
\_\_\_\_\_

"Here," continued Florello, "he made a grimace like that of a man who was just going to the gallows.

'Say no more about it,' said Jacqueline, 'but promise me that at the year's end we shall give up this trade ; for looke, master Hilary, once detected, the whole will transpire, and you know that the longer we play, the more we may lose.'

'Be easy, wife, be easy : if we can but have five or six such windfalls as that of to-day, I'll have done with it ; we shall then be able to live comfortably, and marry Gertrude to the rich Saint Jacques.'

Come,

Come,' said he to his daughter, ' it is time to be at work ; get ready the necessary instruments.'

" I shuddered during this horrid conversation," continued Florello, " and at one moment thought of calling out to master Hilary that he was going to murder his own son ; but I was restrained from doing so by the fear that the wretch would probably dispatch me in his rage, without listening to my proofs. Nature operated forcibly upon my mind, and the sentiment of self-preservation prevailing over every other, I flattered myself that I should escape whilst the monsters were perpetrating their crime. Upon Gertrude's return into the room, she placed upon the table two large cutlasses, a copper basin, and a dark lanthorn. The inhuman trio then putting

on linen dresses already stained with blood, tucked up the sleeves; and Gertrude taking the lanthorn and the bason, prepared to leave the room with her parents, carrying each of them a cutlass.

‘Which shall we begin with?’ said Jacqueline.

‘With the one who gave me the purse,’ replied master Hilary.

‘No, no,’ said Gertrude, ‘he is scarcely asleep yet, for it is not half-an-hour since I quitted him; we had better therefore begin with the other.’

‘With all my heart,’ answered the father; ‘but let us make haste, for it is late, and the nights are short.’

“As soon as they had quitted the room I opened the door, and traversing the chamber, flew towards the vestibule that communicated with the entrance into

into the street, but I was stopped by another door fastened by an enormous lock. Seeing therefore no means of escaping out of the house, I ran up towards the garret, and upon the staircase heard several groans, proceeding no doubt from the unfortunate Casimir, expiring under the weapons of his parents. My heart was agonized at the thought, my senses were chilled at the idea of this horrid scene; but the dread of the murderers overcame every other consideration, and running up to the garret, I hurried to a window, and resolved, if pursued, to throw myself out of it into the garden. I now listened at the head of the stairs, where for some time all was silent; but I at length heard master Hilary in the passage.

‘Jacqueline,’ said he, ‘we are all lost;

he is not in his room; he has certainly discovered our intentions, and has escaped.'

'How should he have got out?' replied the woman: 'for my part, I am sure he is still in his chamber, or if not there, he must be somewhere in the house; let us go and look for him. We have no time to lose, but don't let us despair until we are certain that he is gone.'

"Not thinking myself in safety in the garret, I got out of the window, and with much difficulty climbed upon the roof, which was almost perpendicular, and extremely slippery; and I was no sooner there than I heard the assassins in the garret, where they seemed fully expecting to have found me."

'He is no longer in the house,' cried

Hilary;

Hilary; 'and what in the world will be, come of us if he should have got away?'

"When they had quitted the garret, I crept in at the window and returned to my listening-place, where I heard Jacqueline say that they must bury the corpse directly to prevent suspicion, if the other should return; and presently afterwards I heard master Hilary go down stairs, and the women employed in washing and scouring the passage, and the room where the murder had been committed. Hilary soon afterwards joined them, and in the most shocking terms blasphemed his Maker; and cursing heaven, hell, and the whole world, talked of nothing but the escape and consequent report of the other traveller. As day began to dawn, his apprehensions and imprecations increased, and were re-

doubled on his hearing a violent knocking at the door.

‘ There they are !’ said he, ‘ there are the officers of justice ! The youth has discovered all, and denounced us to the police—we shall all be hanged ! Oh, Jacqueline ! what is it that we have done ? ’

‘ Aecursed stranger !’ said Jacqueline. ‘ Ah ! would you had but listened to me when I told you that he interested me ? But let us not despair : there are no proofs against us ; and perhaps, after all, it is not the police that is at the door.’

‘ The knocking being violently renewed—‘ Come,’ continued she, ‘ let us open at once ; if we delay any longer, it may awaken suspicion.’

“ Whilst they were opening the door, I came down almost into the vestibule, and heard master Hilary inquire who it

was

was that knocked so vehemently at such an early hour?

‘It is I,’ answered a man; ‘open the door quickly.’

‘And who are you, pray?’ inquired the agitated innkeeper.

‘Why, in God’s name, master Hilary; don’t you know the voice of your own brother-in-law, Martin Billot?’

‘Ah! it is you, is it?’ said he, opening the door; ‘and what the devil brings you here at this time in the morning?’

‘Something that will assuredly give you great pleasure. But tell me, are the two young men who came to lodge here last night up yet?’

‘Two young men?’ said the disconcerted Hilary. ‘I—I—never saw any thing of two young men.’

‘What?’

‘What?’ cried Martin, ‘you did not yesterday see two——’

‘No,’ interrupted Jacqueline resolutely; ‘we had no soul in the house last night. Had we, Gertrude?’

“Gertrude answering in the negative, and master Hilary persisting in his assertion—‘That is quite impossible,’ replied Martin; ‘and what is more, I will tell you that one of the young persons is no other than your own son Casimir, who is returned from the West Indies with a handsome fortune, and came last night to see me. But, good Heaven! what’s the matter with you?—you absolutely tremble and turn pale.’

‘Monsters that we are!’ exclaimed Jacqueline, tearing her hair, ‘we have certainly murdered our own child! Yes,

Hilary

Hilary and Gertrude and I killed him but a few hours ago. Oh, my God! is it possible that we should have committed such an execrable deed! What wretches we are!—what a death of torture do we not deserve?"

"Whilst she spoke, she cried and howled most bitterly, and was joined in her lamentations by her husband and their daughter, and honest Martin stood motionless with astonishment and horror; but at that instant he was joined by the neighbours, who had been summoned to witness the happy meeting. When they had learned the subject of the general distress, one of them hastened away, and presently returned with the officers of justice, followed by a crowd of people. I then thought proper to shew myself; and

and having related what I had heard and seen, I conducted the officers into the cellar, where, upon digging, we found several dead bodies, some of which were wholly disfigured and nearly putrid, and others in such a state as proved the murderers to have been recently committed. The corpse of Casimir was found still unburied, and having been examined, was carried away to be properly interred, whilst the murderers, loaded with irons, were conducted into a dungeon. They there confessed that they had for some time assassinated the travellers who had lodged there, whenever they thought they could do so without risk; and they acknowledged in the late horrid transaction the Divine vengeance, which in putting an end to their crimes, punished them in so exemplary a manner.

“ Such,

"Such, my dear Edmund, is the shocking incident that occurred to me; it was with difficulty that I could prevail upon the magistrates at Etampes to allow me to continue my journey, under a solemn promise of appearing against the prisoners upon their trial. My head is so very much disturbed that I scarcely feel that I exist. I think I still hear the groans of the unhappy Casimir—I shudder at the horrible recollection. And my Amelina! I had almost hoped to have found her at her uncle's; but that prospect is at an end, for where shall I find monsieur de Montval?—in what part of Paris can I look for him?"

Edmund now endeavoured to calm the emotions of Florello, and by the simple and energetic eloquence of friendship at length succeeded in quieting his mind; he

he then prevailed upon him to repose, and promised in the meanwhile to inquire after monsieur de Montval, whose house, he said, he should quickly find, by the means of an active and intelligent *valet-de-place*. When Florello awoke, his friend informed him that the count of Montval's hotel was in the Rue de l'Université, Fauxbourg St. Germain, and that he would next morning accompany him thither, and make all the necessary inquiries.

In order not to interrupt the thread of the history, it will be proper to inform the reader that the murderers at Etampes were conducted to Paris, where Florello appeared as evidence against them, and that master Hilary was condemned to be broken on the wheel, and his wife and daughter burned alive, which sentences were

were executed, to the satisfaction of the public, who reflected, that however slow might be the justice of the Almighty, there must come a time when, fatigued by the commission of crimes, Heaven would interpose its authority, and punish the villains who sported with religion, humanity, and the laws.

The morning after Florello's arrival at Paris, he accompanied his friend to the hotel of Montval, and as he drew near it, his heart beat alternately with hope and fear; his suspense was painful to him—a word would increase his happiness or add to his vexation. When they reached the house, Florello inquired for the count, and was told by an aged porter that his master was in Italy.

"But

"But possibly his niece is here?" said Florello.

"His niece!" replied the old man, with an air of amazement: "you must surely be misinformed, for the count has no niece."

"Is the count likely to be long absent from Paris?"

"Indeed, sir, it is impossible for me to say."

"But cannot I speak to his steward?"

"Not at present, sir, for he is at an estate of the count's at Livarot in Normandy."

"When do you expect him?"

"Not these two months."

"That indeed is quite distressing," exclaimed Florello. "Oh, my dearest Amelina! it is all over—we shall never meet again!"

Edmund

Edmund now led him reluctantly out of the house.—“Why,” said he, as they walked on, “why should you cherish such a thought? If I recollect the expressions in the letter of your Amelina, she positively informed you that sooner or later she would meet you at Paris; but because she happens not to be here the very day that you arrive, you give up every thing for lost. Take courage, therefore, my friend!—be persuaded that you will meet again, for it is certain that she loves you too sincerely to break her word, or to make any unnecessary delay; and though I cannot form any conjecture as to her project of coming here, I am of opinion that instead of yielding to useless despondency, you should wait with patience the moment appointed by Providence for your reunion.”

Florello

Florello was obliged to satisfy himself with the arguments of Edmund, and to concentrate his sorrow within his breast, in order not to afflict the friend who had given him such solid proofs of his attachment; but, incessantly occupied about Amelina, his imagination suggested to him that perhaps she might be at Paris, and that not having found her uncle there, she had resolved to continue in retirement until he should arrive. In this hope he inserted the following advertisement in the papers.—“If any persons should be acquainted with a young Portuguese called Octavio de Villa-Flora, they are desired to give information of his residence to monsieur de Lemos, Hotel de Montmartre, at Paris.”

But this advertisement produced no effect, and several months elapsed without

out Florello's receiving any tidings of Amelina. He frequently inquired at the Hotel de Montval, but the count and his steward being still absent, he could learn nothing to the purpose from the old porter. Overwhelmed by his affliction, and convinced that all his steps to discover Amelina were ineffectual, the unhappy youth abandoned himself entirely to despair; he became more and more thoughtful and absorbed; his health was gradually undermined; his pale complexion and hollow eyes announced the sufferings of his mind; he at last fell dangerously ill, and his disorder assumed so serious an aspect, that the first physicians at Paris quite despaired of his recovery.

CHAP.

## CHAPTER II.

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WHILST Selina was endeavouring to conceal her embarrassment from the observation of Octavio, she saw her father approach, and running towards him—  
“ My good father,” said she, “ I am going to tell you a most extraordinary thing. You will hear of a marvellous alteration—Octavio has undergone a wondrous metamorphosis !”

“ How is that, my Selina ?”

“ Octavio is no longer Octavio, but a—woman !”

“ A woman !—Is it possible ?”

“ Yes,

"Yes, sir," replied Adelina; "your daughter has spoken the truth—I am indeed a woman."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the gentleman; "I pray you tell me——"

"I will satisfy your curiosity immediately; indeed it would ill become me to mistrust you, after the great proofs of friendship you have shewn me. Your age and your respectable appearance induce me to have no secrets with you; you and Selina shall therefore be entrusted with every thing that relates to me—I am confident that I have nothing to apprehend from the disclosure. . . I did not deceive you, sir, when I told you that I was born in Portugal; for I was in fact born in that kingdom, at the Castle of Villa-Flora, in Beira——"

"At the Castle of Villa-Flora!" exclaimed both the gentleman and his daughter.

"Yes; my name is Amelina; the late marquis of Villa-Flora was my father."

"Gracious Heaven!—was your father's name Leontio?"

"Certainly it was," said Amelina, with surprise, "and Clementia de Montval was my mother: but how do you know——"

"Oh, my niece! my own dear niece! embrace the brother of Clementia—kiss your uncle and your cousin."

A tender scene ensued between Amelina and her relations, who loaded her with the most affectionate caresses.

"Then you are surely the count de Montval, my uncle?" said Amelina.

"Yes, my amiable niece, I am indeed  
the

the brother of Clementia. Alas ! I dare not inquire after a sister I so cherished, and whom——”

“ She is no more,” interrupted Amelina, bursting into tears. “ Death has made sad ravages in my family; my parents descended to the grave before I had the happiness of knowing them.”

Amelina and her relatives were so much affected that silence for some time took place; but when they were recovered from their emotions, she related to them the misfortunes of her family, as she had heard them from her aunt and Sebaldino. She then mentioned her adventures since her departure from Villa-Flora, omitting, however, from the modesty natural to her sex, her attachment to Florello: but when she had shewn the count the box upon which was the por-

trait of donna Lucia, and which, amidst all her distresses, she had preserved with the utmost care—"I am amazed, my dear Amelina," he said, "that you never suspected this box to contain an important secret: your aunt's note clearly announces it, since she tells you in positive terms that the diamond setting may easily be removed."

"I confess," replied Amelina, "that I never suspected it."

The count then taking a knife, pushed against the setting, and the portrait being loosened and taken off, discovered a small cavity, containing a sheet of fine paper carefully folded up; and upon opening it, Amelina recognized the handwriting of her aunt, and translated from the Portuguese into French, the following interesting contents:—

"If,

" If, as I hope, you succeed in taking off the portrait, read, my dear child, the letter I have transcribed, and let it serve for your guidance in future :

" *Letter addressed to donna Lucia.*

" Leontio still lives—Clementina also is alive—and both are in my power. It would be useless for you, donna Lucia, to attempt the discovery of the places where they are confined; their death and your own would pay the price of your imprudence. But for the curiosity that led you to penetrate the mysteries of which your tranquillity should have commanded you to remain ignorant, you would never have known that my victims were in existence. I consented to let you live in peace, but

as you have gone beyond the bounds you had prescribed yourself, listen, and implicitly obey my will—execute with precision what I am going to command: the life of your brother depends upon your prompt obedience. Depart for Lisbon; a carriage awaits you at the bottom of the avenue of Villa-Flora, and will convey you to Aveiro, where you will make arrangements for the immediate continuance of your journey. Leave the castle without seeing Amelina, but order her, in writing, to proceed without delay to Santa Maria, and do you prepare the abbess Theresa for her arrival; you are neither to inform your niece of your destination, nor at any time to write to her. You shall afterwards receive farther directions, if I find them necessary.—Farewell!—I repeat, that if you take any steps

for

for the deliverance of Leontio, both he, Clementia, and yourself, shall perish.

“THE MARCHIONESS DORIA.”

“To this letter,” continued donna Lucia, “was added a small note, in which I read—‘ My dear Lucia, obey without hesitation: if you refuse, Clementia and myself must inevitably be sacrificed.’ As I knew the handwriting to be that of my brother, I thought it right immediately to submit. What you have read I received this fatal evening. I am confident that I am acquainted with the place where your dear parents are immured. But——Adieu, Amelina! adieu!”

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“This perfectly agrees,” said the count, “with what you have learned from Se-

baldino; and it is therefore subsequent to this letter that the unhappy pair terminated their existence.... Execrable woman! and yet thy crimes remain unpunished!... But by all that is sacred! if Heaven design to preserve my life only a few months, my Clementia shall be avenged, and the punishment of Theron shall appease her troubled ashes."

Amelina then showed her uncle the forged letter that had induced Clementia to quit Villa-Flora, and the deposition forwarded by the alcalde of Burgo, relative to the pretended assassination of that unfortunate and interesting woman.

Monsieur de Montval was astonished at finding his handwriting so well imitated, that he could almost have mistaken it for his own. He then informed his niece that several diplomatic missions to the northern

northern courts had for a long time prevented him from corresponding with his sister—"But when," continued he, "I married the mother of my Selina, who, alas! remained but a little while upon earth, I devoted myself to domestic life, and wrote several letters to the marquis of Villa-Flora and Clementia, until, receiving no answer, and believing them become indifferent to me, I gave up a correspondence in which I alone bore an active part. But I am no longer surprised, for my letters must certainly have been intercepted by that wicked Doriat. Ah, my poor Clementia! you whom I saw as it were come into the world—whom I in a great measure educated, I accused you indeed most wrongfully! Had I but known of your misfortunes, with what alacrity would I not have

flovn to have rescued you from the talons of the barbarous fiend who has finally caused your death!—I told you, yesterday, my dear Amelina, that I was going immediately to Genoa; I am charged with a commission from the king of France, relative to some commercial interests of little consequence, which I hope to settle in a fortnight; after which, I intend to go to Milan, and then to visit the greater part of Italy, for my daughter has long wished to see that country; and as we shall certainly return to Paris in three months, I trust you will have no objection to accompany us?"

" You are very good, very kind, my dear uncle; but I am indeed so tired of moving about——"

" Make yourself perfectly easy on that head;

head; we shall not travel so as to fatigue you. Before we discovered our connexion, my dear niece, I think you talked of going to Paris in search of somebody of your acquaintance; and although you had never known me, I conclude it was to me that you referred?"

"Certainly, uncle," muttered Amelina.

"Well then, my child, since you have found me here, I hope you do not mean so hastily to quit me; and on that supposition I will detail to you the little plan that I have formed. As it was settled between us yesterday, you shall accompany us into Italy, from whence we will go to Paris, and stay the winter; we will pass the spring at one of my estates, and in the summer we will visit Portugal, where I will find out donna

Lucia, secure a husband for you, put you in possession of your fortune, and prosecute the execrable monster who has so cruelly deprived you of your parents. Well, don't you think my project perfectly well imagined?"

Amelina found herself obliged to enter cheerfully into her uncle's views, although they so materially counteracted her own. She now regretted a meeting that had at first appeared so fortunate: but it was useless to complain, and she determined to comply with his proposals without farther hesitation, and to confide in that Providence which had hitherto protected her in a manner so signal and distinguished. She therefore changed her apparel for some clothes furnished by her cousin, and delighted her uncle, who remarked that the female attire added fresh

fresh charms to her person, in restoring to her the graces natural to her sex.

The late count de Montval had been twice married. The present count was his son by the first wife, and his father, who had remarried at an advanced age, had become the father of Clementia, and of another daughter, whose sudden disappearance from the house had given much uneasiness to the family; so that the uncle of Amelina was nearly double the age of his sisters. He was now in his sixty-fourth year, was tall and well made, and his dignified carriage and mien announced him to be nobly descended. His countenance strongly bore the impressions of the generosity, goodness, and numerous other virtues that had taken up their residence in his heart. Generous without prodigality, his purse was

was ever open to the indigent; making use of his influence and power for the sole purpose of doing good, he was ever prompt to undertake the defence of persecuted virtue; he was kind, affable, and extremely popular in his manners, but those manners so abounded with dignity, that in attracting all hearts by his cordiality, he was always sure of inspiring respect. Not dazzled by the brilliancy of his station and fortune, he seemed to derive only from his amiable qualities the splendour by which he was surrounded. His great merit was not without its recompence: he was revered and cherished by all who had the good fortune to be connected with him.

The stature of Selina de Montval was singularly diminutive, but all her limbs and features were perfectly proportioned

to

to her size: her hair, of a jet black, relieved the whiteness of her skin; her bright and sparkling eyes beamed with intelligence and sensibility; her coral lips would have effaced the colour of the pomegranate, and her round and graceful arms were white as the purest alabaster. Quick, yet full of susceptibility, playful yet serious, volatile yet sensible, Selina passed twenty times in a day from melancholy to gaiety, and from gravity to merriment—she laughed or wept at the most trivial occurrences; but her heart was excellent, and that precious quality more than compensated for her trifling defects. She had been taught every thing that usually enters the education of young ladies of her birth; but her impatience and excessive vivacity had hindered her from making any considerable

siderable progress, notwithstanding the quick conceptions of her mind, and the general facility of her temper. If she was tenderly beloved by her father, he was not less idolized by her ; and though she had lost her mother in her infancy, the mild and unceasing attentions of the count prevented her from feeling the privation.

Upon the evening of the day of the important discovery between Amelina and her uncle, the travellers journeyed on to Nice, and the next morning embarked on board a felucca, which conveyed them to Genoa without accident. The weather was calm and serene; the sea wore a very different countenance from that which had so critically determined the fate of the Intrepid; and saved Amelina from a cruel and disgraceful death.

death. The water was now smooth, and of a most beautiful colour, and a gentle zephyr filled the suit of the felucca. Amelina never ceased admiring the beauty of the shore, the picturesque situation of the numerous towns, either climbing up the hills or sheltered in sequestered valleys, the bold rocks crowned with ancient castles, and the magnificent chain of Apennines, broken into various forms, and either covered with olive-trees or displaying their inaccessible and rugged barrenness.

Whilst monsieur de Montval was transacting business with the doge and senate of Genoa, the female cousins visited the various splendid palaces and churches, and the many fine collections of pictures with which that superb city abounds; and as soon as every thing was  
arranged

arranged with the government, the travellers departed for Milan, where they were highly interested by the Ambrosian library; the marble duomo, with its spire, light and elegant as filagree; the academy of Brera, and other splendid structures in that extensive capital of Lombardy.

On the road from Milan to Venice, they were forced to stop at Lodi, on account of the sudden illness of monsieur de Montval, which quickly became a violent fever, and confined him nearly six weeks to his bedroom. It will not be difficult to conceive the uneasiness of Amelina during such a length of time; she was confident that Florello would go to Paris, if he had received her letter, as she hoped, and she felt wretched at the idea of having seen herself on the point of

of

of setting out to join him, and at being now prevented by an unforeseen and insuperable obstacle. All her reflections were tinged with melancholy; she knew no way of informing her lover of her situation, and of the reasons that hindered her from joining him: besides that the illness of her uncle totally prevented him from being able to take any part in her concerns, she felt that she never should have the courage to intrust him with the sentiments of her heart; but she determined to reveal every thing to Selina, for whom her attachment had daily augmented. It was into her bosom therefore that Amelina poured her sorrows, and with tears recounted her melancholy separation from Florello, and the little prospect that she now had of ever seeing him again.

Selina,

Selina, however, lost no time in writing to her father's steward, desiring him to inform her if a young Portuguese nobleman had made any inquiries at the count's hotel? But as Florello had never seen the steward, and had never even mentioned to the porter that he was a Portuguese, the answer from the steward in the negative only served to increase the affliction of Amelina. By Selina's advice, she now decided that upon her uncle's recovery she would entreat him to let her return to Portugal, for she thought, with much appearance of probability, that Florello might not have received her letter, and consequently had not quitted that kingdom. If she had known the address of donna Lucia, she would have written to her without delay, and her heart would have been relieved

lieved by the enumeration of all the disasters that had befallen her since their separation; but to her infinite regret she had met with Gerardo, who alone could furnish her with the desired address, only to witness his destruction.

Notwithstanding her vexation, Amelina failed not to pay every attention in her power to the count, and to share the fatigues and cares of her dear Selina. That respectable man continued very ill during great part of the winter, and his convalescence was scarcely less tedious. The only pleasure enjoyed by Amelina in a situation where she was deprived of the sole object of her affections, was to converse with her cousin about him who was ever present to her mind. She often spoke also of Edmund de Vellanès, in such terms of approbation as to inspire

played about her father, Amelina strolled into the country, and was one evening tempted to follow the winding course of the river Adda, whose cheerful environs reminded her of the times when she wandered over the delightful valleys of Villa-Elora, or lightly traversed the rivulets that contributed to their verdure. Absorbed in her reflections, she followed a narrow path bordered by tufted willows, and night came on before she was aware of the distance she had walked. It presently grew dark; a profound silence reigned around, and Amelina, affected by her previous thoughts, and rather alarmed at the singularity of her situation, with difficulty found her way; when suddenly a light appeared so near her, that she was induced to deviate from the path, for the purpose of requesting at

at the house from whence she concluded the light to proceed, the protection of some person as far as Lodi. But what was her amazement and affright, when she found herself near a mournful monument, surrounded by the attributes of death! Her blood curdled in her veins at so sinister a sight, that brought to her mind the tombs at Villa-Flora, and the melancholy history of her parents.

Upon a broad base of black marble arose a quadrangular pyramid of the same materials, and upon the cornice were ranged eight skulls of dead persons, many of which had most of their teeth remaining. The apex of the pyramid was crowned by a trophy of human bones, and upon each side of it were painted these words, in large characters—

*“Passengers! pray for Laura and*

VOL. III.

D

*Matilda;*

Matilda; both were beautiful, good, and virtuous, and both perished, victims of the most determined wickedness. Six servants were at the same time sacrificed to the vengeance of a villain. Their remains are now united: thus death annihilates distinction.

"Passengers! let this fatal catastrophe impress you with the idea of despising all the good things of this sublunary world, and pray to God for the souls of the departed."

Upon

There really exists such a monument near Lodi, about an hundred paces from the banks of the Adda; but the cause of its structure is not exactly the same that is here assigned. The people of the country are very superstitious, and persuade themselves that the bones have the power of curing certain disorders when fervently addressed in prayer; in consequence of which, this monument is covered with crutches, and a variety of other offerings, under the name of *Ex Voto*. A:

Upon the pedestal of a lofty cross was fixed a lantern; whose light sufficed to distinguish these memorable objects.

"Good God!" exclaimed Améline: "what then is the horrible story referred to by this inscription? Perhaps in this very spot—I tremble—I shudder at the idea."

The terror that overwhelmed her in reflecting that she was alone in this gloomy place prevented her from continuing her soliloquy, and she was on the point of quitting the monument, when she stopped short; still more terrified than before, she perceived a white figure of uncommon stature advancing towards her. But notwithstanding her alarm, Améline remarked that the size of the figure seemed to diminish as it approached, and when it came near her,

her apprehensions vanished, for she saw nothing but a venerable Dominican, whose white robe had occasioned her such terror,—“Holy Father!” she said, “may I inquire the explanation of the words in the inscription upon the monument?”

“Alas, my child!” answered he, with a sigh, “it is a most tragical story that gave rise to the construction of that monument; but I will readily give you the outline of it, notwithstanding the affliction that such deadly recollections will inevitably occasion me.”

Then inviting Amelina to sit down upon a stone bench near the monument, he in the following words related

### THE HISTORY OF STEPHANI AND LAURA.

" I AM a Frenchman, conducted by misfortune to this spot, which I never shall abandon, and my family, of distinguished rank, was so intimately connected with that of Laura de Fauville, that our union was projected from our infancy, and age, fortune, birth, and inclination, all appeared to favour the alliance.

At fifteen years of age I adored Laura with an ardour that seldom had been equalled; and though she had but just attained her fourteenth year, her tenderness was not less active than my own.

Alarmed at the consequences of a passion that manifested itself with such violence in its origin, our parents thought

it right to separate us during some years, our early age not allowing an immediate consummation.

My father having a large property at Martinico, which it was necessary for him to visit, he resolved that I should accompany him, and remain there until the time fixed for our marriage.

I was thunderstruck at the intimation of this order. To quit my Laura! death itself seemed to me preferable; but all my entreaties were ineffectual; I was under the necessity of obeying, and was forced to leave the spot where dwelt the dearest and most valued part of myself.

During the five years that I passed in the West Indies, I had no other pleasure than that of receiving letters from my

my Laura, which increased my impatience to see her, and my vexation at such a continued separation.

At length, to my great joy, my father announced his intention to return to France, and to complete my marriage with mademoiselle de Fauville; and upon our disembarking at Brest, where my father had business to detain him, I obtained his permission to hasten to Paris, where I flew to the Hotel de Fauville, and was no sooner introduced to Laura's mother, than she burst into tears, and was on the point of fainting in my arms.

"In the name of Heaven, madam," I said, in violent agitation, "what has happened? For God's sake, relieve me from my anxiety!"

"Alas!" she replied, with a sobbing voice—"alas! Laura——"

"She is dead then?" I exclaimed, and instantly fainted and fell upon the floor.

When my senses were restored, I found myself in bed, and Laura's mother and a physician standing near it.

"Laura is dead!" I repeated: "let me die also—I cannot live without her!"

"Unhappy youth!" said the mother, "calm that vehemence, which may otherwise be fatal to you. Laura still lives."

"Does she then live? Ah! why did you induce me to think otherwise?"

"She lives," replied madame de Fauville, mournfully; "but she is dead to you."

"Dead to me! How is that possible?—what has happened to her?"

"She is married!"

I was now seized with a violent fever, attended by delirium, and every alarm-

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ing symptom : but Providence had destined for me many years of affliction, and permitted not the termination of my existence; and when I grew well enough to talk with moderation about Laura, I learnt the following details.

Six months before my arrival at Paris, an Italian nobleman, of the name of Stephani, brought letters of recommendation to madame de Fauville, who received him with the greatest politeness; and did every thing in her power to amuse him.

Count Stephani, who was about twenty-six years of age, was so struck with Laura's beauty, that he instantly fell in love with her, and made his proposals of marriage to her mother, who told him that she felt highly flattered by the preference he had shewn to her daughter,

but that Laura's attachment, and the most solemn engagements, deprived her of the honour of acceding to his propositions.

Stephani, naturally jealous and vindictive, and now burning with passion for the beauteous Laura, determined to be revenged for what he considered as an affront; and as no suspicions were entertained of his schemes, he easily found means to carry off the object of his desires, and consummate a crime that rendered it impossible for her to accept any other husband but himself; and thus dishonoured by this monster, she felt constrained to accept his hand, and her mother as reluctantly received him as her son-in-law.

It was not probable that Laura could have enjoyed happiness with such a man, even

even if the recollection of our mutual love had not existed to press upon her mind; and she was rendered completely wretched by his soon after insisting on her accompanying him into Italy, whither, however, he allowed her to be attended by her young sister Matilda, and several French servants.

Although Stephani's whole property was in Sicily, of which he was a native, he chose to establish himself near Lodi, and purchased a house that stood on the very spot where we now sit.

When I was informed of this circumstance, I determined to repair to the house, to catch a glimpse of my beloved Laura, and then to seclude myself for ever in a convent; and I imposed upon myself the painful task of not discovering myself to her, lest I should wound

her delicacy and disturb her future tranquillity.

On the day of my arrival at Lodi, I heard that Stephani and all his family were to depart the next morning for Sicily; I therefore strolled in the evening to the house, and long wandered about in the hope that Laura would appear; but I was about to return, quite dispirited at the idea of her going to Sicily (whither I resolved to follow her), when I saw by moonlight a woman directing her steps towards the Adda.

I followed her at a distance, and seeing her sit down by the river-side, I approached, and concealed myself behind some bushes, from whence I perfectly beheld her. It was indeed my Laura!—but, good God! how changed from her whom I had seen so resplendent with

with beauty ! Her face was pale and thin, and tears fast trickled down her cheeks.

I was often tempted to throw myself at her feet, and receive her last farewell; but a timely reflection on the consequences of such an action, both to Laura and myself, repressed my wishes and checked my impetuosity.

The evening was extremely fine ; the moon coloured with its soft and silver tint the trees, the meadows, and the distant hills, and was reflected upon the surface of the stream. With eyes fixed upon the brilliant firmament, Laura seemed ready to spring into that happy region—the only one where she might find a termination to her misfortunes.

After a few moments, she heaved a deep sigh, and mournfully exclaimed—

“ Oh,

"Oh, moon! thy soft, thy melancholy light, so charming to minds of sensibility, shews to me for the last time the landscape that I so frequently have admired! But these fields are not those of my dear natal country. The sole object of my affections is lost to me for ever, and my beloved mother——But let me forbear these lamentations: there is no one to hear them——there is no one at hand to give me comfort. For the last time, oh, moon! I see thy brilliancy reflected upon the surface of the waters, and the half gloomy tints spread over those lofty trees. Farewell!—a long farewell!" Then taking a small flask out of her pocket, and swallowing the contents—"I am now at ease," she resumed; "nothing can henceforward disturb the repose I am going to enjoy."

With

With a stick that lay near her, she then traced some lines upon the fine sand by the river-side, but was interrupted by the sound of a loud and terrible voice calling out, "Where are you, Laura?—what are you about?" and at that moment I saw a man approach her, whom I of course concluded to be Stephani.

"I am here by the river-side," she answered, in a tone of tremor.

"Follow me directly, madam," was the reply. "The time of our departure draws near; it is necessary for you to repose; we shall set off as soon as it is daylight."

She obeyed without a word.

Grief and indignation oppressed my heart at seeing myself thus deprived, perhaps for ever, of her who, but for the

vilest

vilest of all crimes, would never for a moment have abandoned me.

When Stephani and his unhappy wife were out of sight, I repaired to the spot that she had quitted. I kissed with transport the ground that she had trodden, and, excited by a tender sort of curiosity, and by the hope of finding something relative to myself, I hastened to read the words she had written upon the sand; and it was not without a torrent of tears that I perused the following epitaph—

*“Here lies the unhappy Laura, the child of misfortune—the victim of wickedness and vice. Deign to compassionate her destiny. She had a tender heart—and she loved—oh, so sincerely—”*

A melancholy foreboding impressed itself upon my mind. This epitaph, the last words

words of Laura, and her solemn mournful countenance and manner, all conspired to fill me with apprehension.

I resolved therefore to travel into Sicily, and to prevail upon her to withdraw from the tyranny of Stephani: but it was in vain that I endeavoured to overtake them upon the road; nor was it possible for me ever to procure the smallest intelligence about Stephani, except that he had long since sold his property in Sicily, and that no one knew whither he was retired.

I therefore quitted that island, and after travelling through every part of Italy without success during two years, I returned to Lodi, where I hoped to acquire some information; and I learnt that no tidings had been received of Stephani,

phani, and that he had carried away the keys of his house without giving any one directions to take care of it.

Excited by an irresistible curiosity, I resolved to get admission into the house, and by the means of false keys I entered it one evening, and in one of the rooms on the ground-floor, perceived eight human skeletons stretched upon the floor!

At this shocking spectacle I involuntarily drew back, and was scarcely able to support myself; but, led on by a sentiment still more forcible than my repugnance, I cast my eyes around me, and discovered a piece of paper, which I hastily picked up, and which I found to be a letter in the handwriting of Laura. It was addressed to her mother, and

and contained the following melancholy lines:

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"With a head bewildered by despair, and scarcely knowing whether I exist, it is for the last time that I write to my dear mother. It will soon be all over, and I shall deliver myself from the tyranny of a monster whom the foulest of crimes constituted my husband.

"This very night I shall swallow a dose of poison, prepared by my own hands, and the effect of which I know to be unavoidable. Pardon me, oh God! for thus disposing of my life, but my mind was no longer able to support such cruel torments.

"Dear youth of my affections! death alone can now reunite us; at least, when that

that moment shall arrive, there will be none to hinder it. It is only in the next world that you will find me uncontaminated and worthy of your love—it is only there that we can be happy.

“ I fear that Stephani will commit some dreadful excesses when death shall have closed my eyes. Poor Matilda! kind-hearted amiable girl! God grant that he do not render you answerable for my dissolution! I entreat him to re-convey you to that paternal mansion which your friendship for me prevailed upon you to quit. What evils—what calamities I foresee! The violent passions of Stephani—his ungovernable rage and disappointment. Heaven avert this frightful scene from my last looks! My senses are disordered—I know not what I write—I everywhere perceive nothing but

but coffins, tombstones, and the dead !  
Oh death, come to my relief !—delay  
not to seize your victim ! Come quickly  
—I am ready for you !

“ Adieu, my tender mother ! Adieu !  
adieu for ever !

“ LAURA DE FAUVILLE,  
“ *called* COUNTESS STEPHANI.”

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This fatal letter drew from me abundance of tears, and in a great measure explained the horrible spectacle that I had witnessed. It occurred to me that the liquor which Laura had swallowed by the river-side was the poison that had occasioned her death, and that having produced its effect upon her return to the

madame de Fauville the last melancholy letter from her daughter.

Since that moment my days have been one constant scene of penitence. God has deigned to have compassion on my heart. I have sacrificed every affection to the adoration of the Supreme Being, and to the contemplation of his goodness and wisdom: I am wholly detached from every thing upon earth, and have now no other pleasure than that of coming every evening to pray in this melancholy spot.

Thus, fair stranger, have I reached my seventieth year: if your days are destined to be so prolonged, may you avoid such formidable trials!"

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The monk then rising, threw himself upon his knees before the monument, and began fervently to pray, and Amelina, respecting his religious employment, silently retired along the path that seemed to conduct to Lodi. She had not proceeded far before she met a servant whom Selina had dispatched in quest of her.

Upon her return to the inn, she related to her cousin the sad story she had heard, and both of them, affected by the misfortunes of the lovers, shed tears to the memory of the ill-fated Laura.

When the count was recovered sufficiently to travel, he found it necessary to give up his intended journey through Italy, and to return immediately to Paris, whither he was summoned by some family affairs.

Amelina was overjoyed at this intelligence, for she again thought that Florello might have received her letter, and might be still in quest of her at Paris; and her heart was big with hope, when, having traversed the Alps, the travellers descended into Dauphiny, and in a few days found themselves in the capital of France.

But, the count, having business at his estates, conducted his daughter and Amelina to his magnificent villa at St. Cloud, where he intended they should remain till his return—a resolution which gave them great pleasure, on account of the liberty that it afforded them, and because the season began to render a great city disagreeable. It was late in the month of May; the earth was clothed in its most verdant array, and re-animated nature

nature filled every heart with expectation.

But in the midst of this universal gladness, Amelina was soon again a prey to melancholy ; she had heard no tidings of Florello at Paris, and she impatiently awaited her uncle's return, to engage him to conduct her into Portugal. Her greatest amusement was to accompany Selina into the delightful wood of Boulogne, where they chose the most unfrequented paths.

One day, as they strolled along a solitary walk, their attention was attracted by the voice of one singing in an adjoining alley, whose accents penetrated Amelina to the soul; and after listening a few moments, she darted out of the path, traversed with the celerity of a deer the

intervening space, and found herself in the arms of Florello.

The eloquent pen of Rousseau himself could never do justice to the tender scene that now took place between the lovers, nor shall we attempt to describe a meeting as unexpected as it was un hoped for.

When Amelina and Florello had gradually recovered that reason which, in Selina's eyes, had been suspended by their excessive raptures, her cousin acquainted her with her unlooked-for happiness; and then seating themselves upon the grass, she informed Florello of every thing that had happened to her since their separation in the forest.

The first movement of Florello, when she had done speaking, was to throw himself upon his knees and return thanks to

to Heaven for having preserved her of whom he had concluded himself for ever deprived. He then related his various adventures, but suppressed the manuscript of Leontio, lest he should too grievously afflict the susceptible heart of Amelina; for as she was persuaded that her father was dead, he deemed it useless to reveal the truth, because, if he should be fortunate enough to restore him to liberty, it would be a most agreeable surprise to her; and if, on the other hand, he should be unsuccessful, it would spare the renewal of her grief.

When he came to the period of his illness, Florello thus continued his narrative—"I was saved more by the united efforts of youth and nature than by the prescriptions of the physicians; but the

crisis was so violent, that I long felt its effects, and during the whole winter I led a life of weariness and languor, wishing for that death which, I now thank Heaven, was deaf to my entreaties. As I grew stronger in spring, Edmund thought that country air would be of service to me, and hired a lodging at AnteUIL both for himself and me (for that truly kind friend has never for a moment abandoned me, and it is chiefly to his care and affection that I feel myself indebted for my life). And now, my dearest Amelina, I am going to tell you something that I am sure will give you the greatest pleasure: your aunt Lucia has disclosed the place of her abode."

"What! my aunt—my good aunt!  
Ah!"

Ah! if that be the case, I am indeed happy. But pray continue, and tell me all about it."

"**D**onna Lucia, who had retired to Lisbon, and lived in almost perfect seclusion, having been informed of our escape from Santa Maria, had no comfort until she found out the marchioness of Vellanès, with whom she immediately formed the closest intimacy. I am now in regular correspondence with your aunt, who joyfully consents to our union; and as I was persuaded that we should never meet in France, I had resolved to return to Lisbon, and take every possible method for discovering your situation. But, thank Heaven, my Amelina, all that is rendered unnecessary by the fortunate rencounter of to-day. I have also the satisfaction of acquainting you

that the marchioness of Vellanès has already sent to us Augusto, the faithful servant of her son, and whom you will remember to have seen for a moment at Villa-Flora. His attachment to his master and his regard for me deserve our warmest praises—such a servant is a real treasure; and in every occurrence, in every emergency, his zeal and fidelity, as well as his intelligence, may be relied upon. You will presently see our good friend Edmund, who promised to meet me here upon his return from Paris.—And see—there he comes!"

Selina lifted up her eyes with earnestness; and she saw advancing along the walk a young man, who, as he drew nearer, discovered to her the features which she had so frequently admired in a portrait far inferior to the original.

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The amazement and satisfaction of Vellanes were beyond expression; the proofs he exhibited of his joy were as forcible as they were sincere; and after warmly congratulating Amelina, and being cordially introduced to her cousin, he engaged Florello to tell him by what fortunate chance he found himself in company with her whose loss he had so frequently deplored. During their discourse, Selina stole many a glimpse of the friend of Florello, and her eyes and heart both coincided in the idea that Edmund was a most accomplished and interesting youth.

As it was now necessary to separate, and as it was not decorous for the female cousins to receive the two young men at the villa of the count de Montval during his absence, Florello was forced

to be satisfied with escorting Amelina to the house, and with her promise of meeting him again the next day in the same place, when they proposed deliberating upon the measures requisite to be immediately adopted.

Upon their return to Anteuil, Edmund confessed that the charming Selina had made a deep impression upon his heart.—“It is all over,” continued he; “my indifference is at an end. Since I met that adorable girl, my existence seems renewed, or rather my life commences but from that moment. Ah, my friend! if I can but render myself agreeable to Selina, I shall think myself at the summit of felicity; but if my passion should not be requited, nothing will equal my wretchedness—I shall be eternally unhappy!”

Delighted

Delighted at Edmund's avowal, Florello approved his attachment, and by the warmth of his expressions increased the ardour of his friend; so that Edmund, who in the morning had been perfectly easy and unshackled, now lived only for an object whom he might be said scarcely to have seen.

The next day the meeting again took place in the Wood of Boulogne; and whilst Amelina and her lover enjoyed anew the pleasure of seeing each other, whilst they related a thousand little incidents that had escaped them the preceding evening, and whilst they talked over their future projects of happiness, Edmund entered into conversation with the charming Selina. He at first talked to her only upon indifferent subjects, but

being emboldened by the prepossessing manners of Selina, he ventured to tell her how much he envied the lot of Florello, and to ask her if the happiness of Amelina was not also to be envied?

She replied only by a sigh, which though sufficiently expressive, was not understood by the timid Edmund, who, fearing he had proceeded too far, soon changed the conversation, and they were presently after joined by Florello and Amelina.—“I will now tell you,” said the latter, “the plans that we have formed. As soon as my uncle is come back, I will acquaint him with an attachment that I have hitherto thought proper to conceal from him, because circumstances and delicacy seemed to require me to do so. After obtaining his permission

mission to return into my own country, we will depart for Portugal with Edmund, and——”

“And,” interrupted Florello, “upon our reaching Lisbon, we will repair to your good aunt; and you, my sweet friend, will consent to unite yourself for ever to the happy mortal whom your heart has chosen. Is not that what you were going to say?”

Amelina blushed, and with a charming smile—“Yes,” said she, “that is precisely the subject of my thoughts: but till my uncle arrives, we must meet only in secret, for the count’s servants would think it very extraordinary if Selina and I received the visits of two young men.”

“I think, however,” said Selina, “that we

### CHAPTER III.

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As soon as the young friends had supped, Edmund retired to his chamber, and when he thought Florello was asleep, he took his sword and his guitar, and quitting the house, hastened to the villa of Montval. The night was extremely fine and serene ; the moon spread its soft light over every object ; it seemed as if nature was in unison with the intentions of Vellanès. When he reached the iron gate, he climbed over a part of the wall which he had before remarked to be broken down, and entered the inclosure that contained

contained the idol of his soul. After traversing an alley of acacias, whose flowers scattered a sweet perfume, he passed along a narrow walk overshadowed by lime-trees, till he came to a small door, which he pushed open, and then following a winding path between rows of bushy evergreens, he reached a spacious octagon, in whose centre was a pavilion of an oval form, light and elegant in its architecture. Cypresses and poplars surrounded the pavilion, and gracefully mingled with its columns; the finest turf covered the earth, and a great number of magnificent vases, filled with flowers, were tastefully disposed around the building. In front of the pavilion, and environed by roses and jessamine, was a statue of Silence, represented by a beautiful youth, with one of his fingers on

on his lips. Edmund, little moved by these beauties, hurried from the pavilion, and after following a narrow and serpentine alley, saw before him an open place; but what was his surprise on again finding himself near the pavilion he had quitted! Desirous of repairing the lost time, he quickly pursued another path; he redoubled his speed, when, to his renewed and increased amazement, the pavilion again appeared before him.

Astonished at a sort of fatality that in spite of his efforts always led him to the same spot, he attentively examined the octagon, and presently conjectured that he was in a labyrinth; and the statues of Dædalus and Icarus, which crowned the dome of the pavilion, and which he had not before observed, immediately confirmed him in his idea. He then attempted

tempted to find his way out of the labyrinth, but his endeavours served only to bewilder him the more—the pavilion was ever in his sight; and instead of serenading Selina, as he had intended, he began to despair of escaping undiscovered from the garden before daylight.—“The moon shines no longer,” he exclaimed; “the day will soon break. I shall not find my way out of the labyrinth—I shall certainly be found in the gardens, and I shall either compromise the fame of her who is the object of my love, or I shall be arrested and treated as a robber. And what shall I say to Selina? She will assuredly hate me and abhor me. Alas! my imprudent enterprise has but merited it.”

Whilst he spoke, he wandered along one of the paths, and at last had the good fortune

fortune to find the door by which he had entered, and which opened into a walk that conducted him out of the gardens. He thanked his stars for his deliverance, and vowed that he would never risk a similar attempt. Vain and useless vow; as the sequel will presently demonstrate.

In conformity to the idea of Selina, Florello and his friend repaired in the evening to St. Cloud, where they easily obtained permission to walk in the gardens of the count de Montval, which Edmund entered with secret trepidation, and without daring to confess his adventure to his companion.

Soon after they had met Selina and her cousin—"My good friend," said Amelina to Florello, "I hope that in a short time we shall be happy without the

the possibility of interruption. Selina has this morning received a letter from her father, informing her that he shall be here in less than three weeks. The moment of our happiness cannot therefore be long delayed, since, as soon as he arrives, I shall acquaint him with our projects, to which I am sure he will readily assent."

This intelligence, which gave such infinite satisfaction to Florello, was equally unpleasant to his cousin, as far as it related to himself, inasmuch as he saw that it would be impossible for him to obtain the hand of Selina before he quitted France. The prospect of Florello's happiness formed such a contrast with his own situation, that tears started into his eyes: he had indeed ventured to whisper a few words expressive of his love to

to her who was the object of it; but though he was almost certain that he was not indifferent to her, he never could prevail on himself to make the entire confession of that passion which his heart acknowledged. Before the party separated, it was decided that Amelina and Florello should write to donna Lucia, and that Edmund should inform his mother of the happy meeting, and the circumstances that accompanied it.

Little mindful of his resolution and vow on the preceding evening, Edmund again determined to scale the walls of the gardens of Montval, with the intention of serenading the object of his affections; and having particularly noticed the walks that conducted to the house, he left Antevil at midnight, and without difficulty reached a marble seat that

was

was placed under the windows of Selina. He had scarcely touched his guitar, and accompanied himself with a few lines of tender import, when a window opened, and he recognized the enchanting voice of one who softly inquired if it was Edmund?—"Yes," replied he, "yes, adorable Selina! it is the most impassioned lover——"

"Silence!" interrupted Selina—"sing no more; in a few moments I will be with you."

He was shortly after joined by the innocent Selina, whose ingenuous mind had been unable to resist the pleasure of listening to an avowal which she had so ardently desired. Without the least apprehension, or the smallest idea of acting wrong, she gave herself wholly up to the passion that filled her mind, and re-

turned

turned the raptures of her admirer with transports not less keen or animated. Both finding themselves at the summit of their wishes, and both equally delighted at the declaration of the tender sentiments they mutually entertained, they strolled into the garden, enjoying the tenderest familiarity, and that charming confidence inspired by the most virtuous attachment. Alas! they were far from thinking of the snare already spread for them by love.

The heart of Edmund palpitated with violence; an unknown tremor took possession of him; his breathing was oppressed, his lips were parched—he answered Selina only by monosyllables; but he insensibly conducted her towards the labyrinth, and they entered it.

The serenity of the night, the air perfumed

fumed with odoriferous exhalations from the flowers in the garden, and the stillness of the hour, disturbed only by the songs of the nightingales, or the murmuring of a rivulet, combined to inspire the most voluptuous sensations. The disorder in Edmund's mind rapidly increased; a consuming fire circulated in his veins—one single idea floated in his imagination; overcome by his passion, led astray by his desires, and not longer able to resist their impulse, he pressed his warm lips upon those of Selina. Oh! what sensations were caused by such a kiss, in the bosom of that young and susceptible girl! A sudden ardour thrilled through her whole person—she sought not to repel the first caresses of love. Yielding to the all-powerful fascination, bewildered, intoxicated with

tenderness and affection, she was incapable of resistance, and the expressions of supplication were succeeded by those of ecstasy and transport. Edmund greeted her with the sweet appellation of his wife—she acquired that interesting title, and he repeated it a hundred and a thousand times.

But the moment of delirium was past; recollection succeeded: the laws of honour had been forgotten, and the moon shone upon the shame of profaned modesty, upon his remorse, and her despair.

Selina wept bitterly—Edmund sighed and was silent; each looked at the other with astonishment, till Edmund, throwing himself at her feet—“ My dearest Selina,” he said, “ I am a villain and a monster; I have taken advantage of your confidence—I have abused your innocence

cence and candour. Heavenly creature! could you trust a man so unworthy of you?—could you—There exists, however," resumed he, after a pause—"yes, there exists a method of repairing my offence; I may yet efface my dishonour—I may yet purify myself in my own eyes. Let us fly to your father, acknowledge my indiscretion, and confess my fault. He is a man—he is a father, an indulgent father—he has a heart full of sensibility—he will surely forgive us—he will consent to our indissoluble union."

"What do you propose to me?" said Selina—"Shall I go and confess to my father the disgraceful situation in which I am plunged?—shall I wound by such avowal the heart of my kind parent?—

No, no! never, never! I had rather die a thousand times——”

“Cruel Selina!” interrupted Edmund; “you would have me perish also, by refusing to restore to me that esteem of myself, of which one fatal moment has deprived me? In the name of love, of virtue, of every thing that is sacred, let me conjure you to become my wife—to consent that our union be consecrated at the altar! My birth is equal to your own—my fortune is equal to your father’s; we love each other—we are already become man and wife in the eyes and by the laws of nature. Will you then object to render legal that union which our hearts and the impulse of love have coincided to cement?”

After a momentary silence—“Well,” exclaimed

exclaimed Selina, "I cannot help consenting to your proposals, upon condition that you inform Floelle of the events of this fatal evening, whilst I pour my shame and grief into the bosom of Amelina. Make your arrangements with your friend; return here at midnight with a priest, and I will receive your hand in the pavilion. After the performance of the holy ceremony which is to restore to me my character, but not do away my remorse, let a carriage be ready to receive and convey us into Portugal with our friends. Far removed from the frowns of a justly-irritated father, I shall acquire courage to implore his forgiveness. If your affection for me, Edmund, be as sincere as I love to believe it, you will prove it by your zeal in the execution of what I have pre-

scribed you. Here is the key of the iron gate; escape quickly, and return at the hour I have mentioned: if you hesitate but for an instant, reflect upon my tenderness and gratitude on the one hand, and my despair and dissolution on the other."

Selina fled so rapidly at the conclusion of these words, and Edmund had been so attentive to their import, that she had disappeared almost before he was aware of her departure. Shocked at the deed he had committed, but in some measure consoled by Selina's discourse and proposition, he pensively returned to Anteuil, and awakened Florello, who was alarmed at his wild looks, his dishevelled hair, his unusual paleness, and the apparent disorder in his dress.—“In the name of Heaven, relieve me from my anxiety!”

cried

cried he; " tell me what has happened to you, Edmund?"

" What has happened to me! Ah, Florello! innocent and secure in the affections of Amelina, you slept peaceably, whilst I—I have defiled the object I adored—whom I loved with a regard so pure!"

" How!—is it possible that——"

" Yes, I have dishonoured Selina; her candour—her innocence—nothing could check the torrent of my desires. My friend, I should have died upon the spot, if she had not deigned to point out the means of repairing the outrages I had committed."

He then explained what Selina had required him to perform, and Florello having perfectly approved it, he proposed

to Vellanès to accompany him immediately to Paris to make the necessary arrangements, and during the route he employed all the persuasive eloquence of friendship to sooth the troubled mind of his cousin, whose sorrow and remorse affected him extremely. He certainly never would have suggested to Edmund the adoption of such means for obtaining the hand of Selina ; but as his crime was assuredly unpremeditated, and occasioned by the violence of his passion, he was of opinion that Edmund should profit by it, in order to secure his own happiness and that of the object of his love. He wished indeed that it might have been so managed as to render it needless for Selina to quit her father's house ; but as that did not appear practicable, he was  
not

not sorry that Edmund's adventure served to hasten his own wished-for union with Amelina.

By the intervention of the landlady of the hotel where they had lodged at Paris, they readily found a priest, who for the sake of a few louis d'or consented to perform the marriage ceremony clandestinely. They then purchased a travelling-coach and other things requisite for the journey; and having ordered Augusto to make all the necessary preparations, and to be precisely at midnight at the count de Montval's garden-gate with the coach and four post-horses, they quitted Paris with the compliant priest, and returned in the evening to Antequil.

Just before the clock struck twelve, they repaired to the pavilion in the labyrinth, where they found Selina, pale,

trembling, and embarrassed, leaning upon the arm of Amelina; her cheeks were moist with tears, and she dared not turn her eyes on him to whom she was to be united.

Edmund was also in a situation worthy to be pitied—the change in the countenance and features of Selina filled him with vexation and self-reproach; and they both resembled victims ready to be sacrificed, rather than lovers on the point of mutually protesting their eternal constancy and attachment.

The ceremony was performed in the presence of Amelina, Florello, and Augusto, who, according to his orders, had arrived at the garden-gate with the coach, exactly at midnight. When Selina pronounced the sacred promise, she let fall her hand into that of Edmund, and fix-

ing

ing upon him her expressive eyes, the sweet satisfaction they exhibited poured unalloyed happiness into his heart.

As soon as the priest had given the nuptial benediction, he was conducted out of the garden by Augusto, when Florello assuming a serious countenance—“Listen to me attentively, Selina,” he said. “Before you go any farther, reflect upon the situation you are in; do not by a hasty step lay up a store of useless regret. Think you not that before we travel into Portugal, we should all wait upon your father, and confess to him every thing that has passed?”

“I have already reflected,” answered Selina—“I have seriously thought upon the steps I ought to take, and I am decidedly of opinion that we should by no

means adopt the plan you have proposed. My resolution is unalterable—I must accompany you into Portugal, without waiting for the arrival of my father."

"In that case," said Florelle, "let us instantly depart; every thing is ready for the journey. We will convey you to Edmund's mother, one of the most amiable and respectable of women, who will do every thing in her power to appease the anger of your father."

"Oh yes! let us go; I entreat it!" exclaimed Selima. "I can no longer see without shuddering a spot that witnessed my disgrace; let me then fly from it directly. Now that Edmund is my husband, it is my duty to accompany him—but my father! my tender father! I must

must avoid him for the present. Oh! to what dreadful privation am I reduced by my indiscretion!"

"Certain," said Amelina to Florello, "that you would follow my opinion, and not oppose the wishes of my cousin, I have taken care to prepare every thing for the journey; and as the carriage is at the door, let us set off directly—there is nothing to retain us here any longer."

She then called Augusto to take charge of a small trunk, and leaning upon Florello, quitted the pavilion, followed by Edmund, who supported and endeavoured to console his afflicted bride: at every step she felt her heart ready to break; a thousand painful recollections assailed her mind; her tears flowed abundantly, and she was almost suffocated by her sobs.

Having

Having at length reached the coach, Augusto, on horseback, preceded the travellers, who passing rapidly through Paris, soon found themselves on the road to Lyons, and continued their route without stopping to repose till they reached the frontiers of Spain, when they halted a day, in order to recover from their fatigues, and then proceeded to Madrid with as much celerity as the roads and the nature of travelling in that country would permit.

When they reached the capital of Spain, Florello, fearful that if his father should be returned he would detain him longer than he desired, requested Edmund to make his inquiries at the palace of Lemos; and learned that the count was not yet come back, but that his arrival was daily expected. After reposing

reposing three days at Madrid, the travellers pursued their journey, and reaching Lisbon late one evening, established themselves in an hotel, after which Edmund went in search of his mother, to whom he was anxious to communicate his marriage with Selina.

Whilst Augusto conducted him to his mother's, Edmund was greatly agitated at the idea of the pleasure he was about to enjoy, in pressing to his bosom the best and tenderest of parents; but on traversing the churchyard of the Madonna das Mercès, he felt himself so faint, that he was constrained to sit down upon a grave that appeared to have been recently made; his heart was inexpressibly choked and oppressed, starting tears filled his eyes, and his whole frame was shaken by some secret apprehension. At length, however,

however, he recovered himself, and with the assistance of Augusto reached the house where the marchioness resided; but after ringing several times, and nobody answering the bell, Edmund concluded that every one in the house was asleep, and determined to return to the hotel, lest his arrival in the night should too much surprise and agitate his mother. On his repassing the churchyard, he again experienced, though not to so great a degree, the same sensations as before; the sight of the grave, covered with bones and bits of ancient coffins, chilled his very soul, and he fancied that the tomb was on the point of opening, in order to shew him the body it inclosed.

When he joined his friends at the hotel, he mentioned his disappointment in not seeing his mother, and the astonishing

ing emotion he had felt in traversing the churchyard of the Madonna.—“ I much fear,” continued he, “ that this is ominous of evil. Good God! if my mother should be——”

His sobs prevented him from proceeding; Selina and Florello endeavoured therefore to avert from his thoughts such sinister ideas; but though he confessed that they were founded only on improbable motives, he was not able to dissipate the gloomy impression made upon his susceptible mind.

The next morning Florello accompanied Edmund to his mother's, leaving Selina to recover in her bed from the fatigues of so long a journey, whilst Amelina hurried to embrace her aunt, who inhabited part of a handsome house, pleasantly situated in the Strada Nuova di Palmetta.

Palmetta. The door being opened by the good old Marcelosa, Amelina, in a feigned voice, inquired if donna Lucia was at home? and being answered in the affirmative, she walked directly into her apartment, and threw herself at the feet of her dear aunt.

When donna Lucia, who did not at first recollect her niece, had heard the voice and tender expressions of Amelina, she uttered an exclamation of joy, drew her up into her arms, and pressing her to her bosom, gave herself up to the unalloyed transports of such a sudden and unlooked-for meeting.

## CHAPTER IV.

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DONNA Lucia could not listen without bitterly weeping at Amelina's account of her adventures, and bewailing the dangers to which she had been exposed; but as the child of her heart had survived such imminent perils, she confided in the future protection of that Providence which had so signally manifested itself in her preservation. With what sincere and fervent gratitude did she not return thanks to the Supreme Being for having restored Amelina to her arms! The effusions of her mind, thus penetrated with

## THE CASTLE OF VILEA-FLORA.

with happiness and pious acknowledgment, were really sublime as well as affecting.

Aware of the sensibility of her amiable niece, she was cautious not to undeceive her as to the existence of her father, whom Amelina concluded in the tomb; for in combining what Flora had written to her relative, with the manuscript of Leontio, and what Sebaldino had mentioned to Amelina, donna Lucia was firmly persuaded that her unfortunate brother was still alive, and a prisoner in the cavern.

Mareeloa's joy is not to be described: she testified it to her young mistress by every action and expression she could think of.—“My God!” said she, with tears of gladness, “why, how was it possible to recollect you? How tall you are grown!

growit! and then, how steady and composed you are!—But, in fact, two years make a great deal of difference in a young head. Ah, well! now I shall die without murmuring, whenever it shall please God to take me; I have now seen her for whom I daily have offered up my prayers. I only asked that favour, and as it has been granted me, I am satisfied."

The daughter of Letonio was obliged to call forth all her fortitude in order to support the happiness that she enjoyed. To be the daily companion of Florello, and to have found donna Lucia, to whom she felt herself indebted as it were for a second existence!—she could scarcely persuade herself that she was really in the house of that affectionate friend, so much did her felicity astonish her.

"My

"The marchioness of Vellanes ! Alas, my child ! she is no more."

"Heavens !" exclaimed Amelina, "what do I hear ! Unhappy Edmund ! your fatal foreboding was but too well founded."

"She died," resumed donna Lucia, "about a fortnight since : without being seriously ill, her health had lately been declining ; I saw her daily, for her amiable disposition greatly endeared her to me, and I observed with grief that she was decaying, and that, though her sufferings were not acute, her frame was wasting by degrees. A short time before her death, she told me that she felt herself so ill, that she was confident her dissolution was approaching : and, in truth, she expired three hours afterwards, like a lamp whose light gradually diminishes. The name of her son accompanied

accompanied her latest sigh, and she felt no regret but that of being taken away before she had once more seen and drenched him. She conjured me to replace her as far as was in my power, and to acquaint him with her death, with such precautions as were necessary for restraining his affliction. ‘ And as to my dear nephew, Florello,’ she said, ‘ the only favour I have to beg of you, my kind Lucia, is to unite him to your niece as soon as they arrive; let me have the satisfaction of dying in the persuasion of their being happy.’

“ I solemnly and readily engaged to perform the promise that she required, and I shall not be completely gratified till I have fulfilled it.”

“ My God!” said Amelina, “ how much do I grieve for Edmund and his

dear Selina!—what a cruel disappointment to them! It is not unreasonable then to put some confidence in forebodings."

To her aunt's question of the forebodings to which she referred, Amelina replied, by informing her of Edmund's having nearly fainted in a churchyard, and having been persuaded that it denoted some melancholy incident in his family.

"Do you know the name of the churchyard?" asked donna Lucia.

"I think it was that of the *Madonna des Morts*."

"Doubtless then," replied donna Lucia, "it was a sort of notice from Heaven, for the marchioness de Vellanès was buried in that cemetery. But come, my dear child, let us go to your hotel;

the

the affectionate youth must ere now have been informed of his misfortune, and will greatly stand in need of our consolations."

When they reached the hotel, they found Edmund in a state of affliction bordering on despair; his countenance was pale, his eyes sunk and heavy; he sighed bitterly, and his face, turned up towards Heaven, seemed to accuse Providence of barbarity. He was insensible to the consolatory expressions—he rejected the tender caresses of his sorrowing wife.

Donna Lucia, perceiving that it was necessary to strike hard, and even to wound his heart, in order to create a passage for that concentrated despondency which might otherwise become

fatal, immediately addressed herself to Edmund, and entered into a long and pathetic detail of the illness and death of his mother, and of the last words that she had pronounced.

A torrent of tears presently flowed down Edmund's cheeks, and at that decisive moment Selina threw herself weeping into his arms. (Florelio, donna Lucia, and her niece, surrounded him, and their united efforts at last succeeded so well, that his grief, at first immoderate, soon assumed a character more natural and temperate.

He requested donna Lucia to repeat what she had before detailed, and he appeared to taste a melancholy sort of pleasure in dwelling on every thing that related to the last moments of a mother

so deservedly adored by him, and who had been so tenderly and affectionately attached to him.

When he seemed in a great measure soothed, donna Lucia proposed that the four young people should remove to her house, which was sufficiently spacious for them all; and her offer being gratefully accepted, Augusto was ordered to see their baggage conveyed to donna Lucia's, in the Strada Nuova di Palmetta, whilst the whole party accompanied her thither.

Edmund had been informed of the death of his mother by a person who lived in the house which she had occupied, and he had also learned that donna Lucia and the duke d'Almeida had attended her remains to the grave, and

had afterwards sent her servants to Aveiro, where the steward of the deceased was to provide for them till the intentions of the young marquis should be known.

During the first part of Amelina's residence at Lisbon, filial piety and grief interfered with every other consideration; but after the first days of mourning, Selina, Edmund, donna Lucia, and her niece, wrote to the count de Montval, and acquainting him with the late events, implored his pardon, and entreated him to come to Lisbon to ratify the marriage of his daughter, whose happiness would be incomplete till she had obtained the forgiveness of her father.

When this arrangement was made, Florello besought the sister of Leontio to confirm

confirm the hopes she had given him of receiving the hand of his adorable Amelina. Donna Lucia, who was infinitely pleased with him, not only renewed her promise, but assured him that she would next morning name the day that she had fixed for their nuptials.

If will easily be conceived that Florello was eager to be informed of the charming moment of his happiness ; but he was shocked beyond expression, when on entering the apartment of her who was to signify the enchanting decree, he perceived every mark of the most profound sorrow, instead of the serene and glad countenance that he had expected.

"Look!" said donna Lucia—"read that note, which was just given to Marcelosa by an unknown hand ;" and Florello, appalled at her words and appear-

ance, perused the following threatening contents :—

“ I am told that the traitors who have avoided for the moment, but not escaped my vengeance, are now at Lisbon. I know that they are acquainted with my secrets—if they dare to divulge them, let them tremble! If any one amongst you shall take the least step to liberate Leontio, the fatal and irreversible mandate is pronounced—the marquis shall die, and all of you shall perish! The avenging steel hangs continually over your heads—it is constantly pointed against the breast of my prisoner, and at the first attempt—You perfectly understand me. Donna Lucia, be discreet: prevail on them to be so likewise, and

and on those conditions I content to leave you in repose.

### **THE KESAR.**

"Infernal monster!" exclaimed Florelle, "and the vengeance of the Almighty has not yet crushed thee!"

"Florello," said donna Lucia, "if my own life were alone to be the sacrifice, I should not hesitate one instant to take every method of extricating my unhappy brother from the fangs of the fury that retains him in her dungeons. But you must be convinced that he would, in that case inevitably perish, and I should reap no other advantage from my efforts than that of having hastened his dissolution. Horrible as is the idea of knowing that he is counted amongst

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the dead whilst he yet lives, and is worthy of all our tenderness and respect, I still find it more supportable than that of seeing him expire under the dagger of an assassin, directed, though involuntarily, by my hand. Amelina must remain ignorant both of this fatal note and of the manuscript that you have confided to me. Let us not embitter the happiest moments of her life, by acquainting her with evils that she can neither remedy nor avert. Nor shall this circumstance throw any obstacle in our way; but, on the contrary, whilst we have the power, let us hasten to the accomplishment of our wishes. This very evening, if you object not, Amelina shall be your wife."

"Amelina my wife this evening! I object to it! Is it possible that you are serious?"

serious?—is it true, that you intend this very evening?—Oh! how shall I support—where shall I find fortitude to bear, as I ought, this unlooked-for happiness?"

"Be calm, my dear Florello," replied donna Lucia. "Go and communicate my decision to my niece, whilst I provide the necessary papers and licence for your marriage: circumstances require us to avoid all bustle and parade. The ceremony shall be performed without eclat and without publicity, for believe me that true happiness is never to be found in a crowd—it is the inseparable companion of moderation."

After rapturously kissing the hand of donna Lucia, Florello ran to communicate the glad tidings and his transport to Amelina; and whilst the happy and amiable lovers gave themselves up with

out restraint to the delight inspired by the enchanting idea of their approaching union, they were suddenly broken in upon by Edmund.—“I know,” cried he, “I know why joy is painted upon your countenances, and I sincerely felicitate you upon the fortunate prospect that is before you; but I must also receive your congratulations in my turn. My Selina has just informed me that she hopes, in due season, to present me with a pledge of our mutual tenderness. My dear Florello, I shall be a father! What duties does not that sacred title impose on me! Can there be a more happy prospect than my own?”

Whilst he spoke, Selina entered the room, and was congratulated with delicacy and affection by her cousin and Florello; but in the midst of their gaiety, J. D. a letter,

fresh obstacles in the way of the marriage of Florello, who had a mind too pure, as well as too much filial piety, not to feel the impropriety of celebrating his nuptials on the grave of his father; he was therefore constrained to request that donna Lucia would defer his marriage, till decorum permitted him to enter into that holy state without offending the memory of him to whom he owed his existence.

Amelina sincerely participated the sorrows of Florello, and her innocent caresses and attentions greatly contributed to soften them; and as the count his father died some time since, and at a great distance from Europe, those circumstances naturally served to moderate his grief.

A gentleman of great respectability arrived

arrived from Madrid soon after the receipt of the steward's letter, and informed Florelio that Henriquez y Rapinez y Jardinez was by no means to be trusted with the conduct of his affairs, for that he had lately given conspicuous proofs of the dishonesty of his actions, by prevailing upon a young man of fashion, then in bad health and since deceased, to employ him in making his testamentary dispositions, in which he had had the inquiry to give himself a legacy to a very considerable amount, to the prejudice of the only sister of the testator. Florelio therefore ordered Rapinez y Jardinez to give up his papers and accounts to an advocate of reputation at Madrid, to whom Florelio transmitted a power to transact business, and directions to forward him a remittance.

Donna Lucia thinking that sixty days must be yielded to Florello's mourning for his father, it was decided that his marriage with Amelina should take place at the end of that period, and it was agreed that donna Lucia should afterwards accompany them to Madrid, where they intended to reside, and where Edmund and Selina were to join them, as soon as he should have settled his affairs in Portugal.

It was hoped also that during this interval the count de Montval would arrive at Lisbon, or at least favour his daughter with the wished-for answer, for he had already been made acquainted with her pregnancy, and this intelligence was expected to soften him completely, even if his heart had hitherto hesitated to forgive her.

As

## THE CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

from a spot where so many atrocious murders are to be committed under such infamous pretences :" and thus saying, he resumed his walk towards donna Lucia's; but the man in black, having made a sign to two others in the same sort of apparel, they all ran after Edmund, and seizing him by the collar, dragged him immediately before the Inquisition.

When they had conveyed him into that formidable prison, they acquainted the inquisitors with their proceedings; but as those judges were at that time much occupied, they ordered their familiars to conduct the prisoner into a dungeon.

The unhappy Edmund thought with despair of the consternation of his wife and his friends when they should become acquainted with his being imprisoned by

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the holy office; but who was to inform them of that event? and what would be the unpopularity of Selina at the close of day, uncertain of what accident had befallen him! And then his ~~ambition~~ child! These, and similar reflections, almost overwhelmed him; but he at length grew calmer, and proceeded to the examination of his dungeon, which was only five feet square, and received a glimmering of light through a narrow tunnel, placed too high for him to reach. Double doors of iron, enormous bolts, and triple locks, closed this spot, which was wholly destitute of furniture, a few handfuls of damp straw being spread on the large and rough stones that composed the pavement.

Without possibility of escape, Edmund armed himself with courage, and the

the recollection of his beloved Selina, and of the tender pledge of their affections, inspired him with resignation and strength to support the change that had taken place in his happy situation.

Upon the second day of his confinement, two men opened the door of his dungeon, and ordering him to follow them, conducted him into a large room hung with black, and dimly lighted by torches. On one side was a tribunal, rather elevated, and surmounted by a canopy of velvet; opposite to it was an altar, covered with a cloth of gold and pearls, that fell down before it upon the ground; a large ivory crucifix stood upon the altar. Not far from it was a desk, upon which lay a missal, richly bound and ornamented; and the farthest end of the room contained a multitude

of

of pulleys, ropes, irons, and other instruments of torture.

The guards now ordered Edmund to kneel down in this hall of terror, and not to stir from the spot; but one of them soon going out, and not returning so quickly as his companion expected, he went in search of him, and left the prisoner alone, and upon his knees.

As soon as Edmund found himself alone, he determined to conceal himself under the altar, in hopes of afterwards escaping; and he had no sooner crept under the covering than he heard the door open, and the following dialogue between his guards:—

“What can be become of him?” cried one, in a tone of surprise; “I see nothing of him.”

“That’s singular enough!” said the other;

other; "I left him but a minute or two ago."

"Ah, simpleton!" replied the first; "then you forgot to lock the door, and he has certainly escaped without waiting for his trial."

"I am afraid so indeed; and yet the sentries at the gate will not have suffered him to pass?"

"Bah! Since he has not the uniform of the prisoners, how could they know that he was one?"

"That's very true. But what are we to do? for we shall be finely trounced for letting him go."

"Blockhead! nobody saw us conduct him here; he is not yet past upon the list; who the devil then is to know any thing about him? I can easily manage all that, provided you are but discreet.

creet. Let us go down into his dungeon, and seem as if we were in search of him ; after which, we will declare that we found the door open, and that the prisoner had fled, and we shall hear nothing more of the matter."

" Then let us lose no time."

" Come along—but be sure to be for ever silent upon the subject."

Edmund's heart throbbed violently during this discourse; but when the guards quitted the door, which they left open, a ray of hope came to his relief, and he determined to take advantage of the hints he had gathered from their conversation ; but just as he lifted up the covering of the altar, he heard the sound of footsteps that approached, and therefore concealed himself anew, leaving a small aperture through which he

might discover the persons who should come into the room.

He presently perceived three inquisitors, clad in splendid robes, richly adorned with lace, who seated themselves upon the tribunal, and were followed by two familiars of the office, with a table, upon which they deposited a crucifix, a naked sword, and the missal that had lain upon the desk.

A secretary, in a long black gown, having seated himself at the table, the chief of the inquisitors rising, rehearsed some prayers, in which he was joined by the others.

He then ordered the prisoner to be introduced, and an elderly woman was soon after ushered in, wrapped in a sort of sack of black cloth, and surrounded by six executioners, with naked arms, and

and the most ferocious and unfeeling countenances, who, having placed the accused upon a stool before the judges, withdrew to the farther part of the room.

The sword and crucifix being placed upon the missal, and shewn to the prisoner—"Woman!" said the chief inquisitor, "swear by those august symbols of our religion, that you will speak the truth."

"I will swear it," was the reply.

When she had taken the oath that was administered to her, the following interrogatories took place:—

"How long have you been imprisoned?"

"About a year."

"What is your name?"

"Beatrix Cacciaporcini."

“ How old are you?”

“ Nearly fifty.”

“ What is your occupation?”

“ I was *tourière* at a convent.”

“ At what convent?”

“ At that of the Carmelites of Santa Maria, near Aveiro.”

“ Why were you put into the prisons of the holy office?”

“ I am quite ignorant of the reasons.”

“ Quite ignorant! very fine truly! Have you not contributed to the escape of a nun?”

“ It is perfectly true that I assisted a person to quit the convent; but that person was not a nun.”

“ What was she then?”

“ A novice.”

“ Did you not accompany her in her flight?”

“ I did.”

"I did."

"You doubtless are acquainted with the place of her concealment?"

"Assuredly I am."

"Then name it."

"No—that I will never do."

"Wretched woman! have you so soon forgotten the oath that you have taken?"

"I have not forgotten it; but the refusal to betray an innocent and unfortunate fellow-creature can never be deemed a violation of the truth. Do you think that I would have rescued her from the dungeons of Santa Maria, for the purpose of plunging her into those of the inquisition? Holy fathers! Beatrice is but a poor, simple, ignorant woman, but I solemnly assure you, that nothing you can do to her will ever make

her reveal that of which you wish to be informed."

After the inquisitors had conferred together a few minutes, one of them thus resumed the interrogatories.—“ Let me advise you, woman, to profit by the favour granted you by the holy office, whilst yet you have the power. Confess to us, where is the wretched novice who seduced you from your duty?”

“ Nothing upon earth shall tempt me to inform you. Holy Virgin! I should consider myself as a monster, were I capable of it.”

“ I once more, from motives of humanity, desire and advise you no longer to delay the confession that is required of you.”

“ It is impossible for me to acquiesce.”

“ You

" You persist then in your refusal?"

" I do."

" Since she will not speak the truth," cried the first inquisitor, " let her immediately be put to the torture."

" To the torture!" exclaimed poor Beatrix. " Ah! Saviour of the world, have mercy upon me!" and she instantly fainted.

" Has she had any thing to eat to-day?" asked the inquisitor.

" No," replied one of the guards.

" Then bring her something," said the inquisitor.

Beatrix having recovered her senses by the application of some pungent salts, she was desired to recruit herself with some bread and wine; but having refused to do so, she was again required to reveal the place of the novice's con-

cealment, and on her positive denial, the executioners seized and almost stripped her, and flogged her back so unmercifully, that the blood trickled down in abundance from her wounds, and she filled the room with screams, which Edmund heard with the most heart-rending affliction, but which made no impression on the judges and their satellites.

The chief inquisitor at length ordered the executioners to desist, and again applied to the prisoner to know if she would accede to their demands?

“What!” replied she, in a voice interrupted by sobs and groans—“what! rescue her from the hands of the barbarous and vile abbess of Santa Maria, for the purpose of placing her in yours? No—never! never! Do what you please with

with my wretched person, but be persuaded that no tortures shall ever induce me to reveal what you desire. The pain that I endure is indeed great ; but the Holy Virgin will, I trust, inspire me with fortitude sufficient to support it, and strengthen my resolution of not betraying an innocent and injured woman."

To this spirited determination the executioners replied by pouring boiling vinegar upon her wounds, which occasioned her such torture, and produced such shrieks, as would have softened the severest judges ; but the inquisitors remained quiet spectators of this iniquitous punishment, and were callous to every sentiment of humanity.

Finding that nothing could prevail upon Beatrix to disclose her secret, she was reconducted to her cell, and the

judges and their attendants presently leaving the room, Edmund again found himself alone.

It is not possible to describe both his indignation and his sorrow, during the interrogatories and punishment of Beatrix; he had frequently been stimulated to quit his hiding-place, and reproach the barbarous inquisitors with the crimes committed under the sacred veil of a religion of peace—of a religion where clemency is enforced as the first of virtues. But restrained by the recollection of those who were most dear to him, he had reluctantly repressed the impetuosity of his feelings.

He at first thought that Beatrix had been given up to the inquisition by the abbess Theresa, as an accomplice in the escape of Florello and Amelina; but the sequel

sequel of the interrogatories convinced him that he was mistaken, although nothing was uttered that could lead him to form any conjectures as to the novice for whom the *tourière* had thus heroically sacrificed herself.

When Edmund was certain of being perfectly alone, he crept from under the altar and ran to the door, which he found shut and barred without ; he was therefore obliged patiently to submit, and thought himself comparatively happy at being able to refresh his exhausted spirits with the bread and wine that had been brought for Beatrix, and fortunately left upon the altar.

He then returned to his place of concealment, with the hope that in a few hours some favourable circumstance might arise to enable him to escape from

the ensanguined and gloom-inspiring walls.

The remainder of the day passed without any one entering the hall, but during the night Edmund was roused from his uneasy slumbers by the noise of the door being unbarred, and he saw several familiars of the office enter the hall, and light a great number of flambeaux.

An hundred unhappy wretches, destined for the approaching *auto da fé*, were then conducted into this hall of iniquity, where the men were ranged in a line on one side, and the women on the other. Their heads were for the most part uncovered; their feet were bare, and their dress consisted of a linen waistcoat and trowsers, with black and white stripes, but over it seventy of them wore a broad scapulary of yellow linen,

linen, called a *sambenito*, on which were painted, in colours of fire, several crosses of St. Andrew, intermixed with flames, with their points downwards.

The remaining thirty, amongst whom Edmund plainly distinguished the unfortunate Beatrix, wore another kind of scapulary, of a grey colour, called *samarra*, on which was represented the portrait of the devoted victim, placed upon burning piles of wood, and surrounded by flames and demons. Their heads were crowned with a *carocha*, or large pasteboard bonnet, of a conic form, upon which also were painted devils and flames of fire; and these diabolical allusions denoted that the wearers were intended for execution.

After a few hours, wax tapers were lighted and distributed to the unhappy victims,

victims, who were then ordered to advance two by two. At that moment the great bells in the churches solemnly tolled a summons to the faithful to witness the *auto da fé*, and that doleful knell, added to the deep groans and lamentations of those who were to suffer death by fire, produced a gloomy impression, calculated to affect all minds but those that had been hardened by fanaticism and blinded by priestcraft.

Edmund shed a torrent of tears at the sight of this cruel and melancholy procession; but concluding that the time for his escaping during the bustle was arrived, he darted from beneath the altar, slipped amongst the familiars of the office, and traversing the outer court, quitted the horrid prison at the same moment with those who were conducted to

to the flames, amidst songs of praise and thanksgiving to that God of all goodness whom such a sacrifice could not but offend.

When Edmund had with difficulty traversed the immense crowd that lined the streets, his joy on finding himself at liberty had such an effect upon his mind, that he wandered about without being able to find his way; but at last, perceiving that he was running in an opposite direction to that which he ought to have pursued, he returned and found himself compelled to pass by the square where a vast multitude was collected to see the horrid execution.

Two thrones, magnificently decorated, were placed near each other, and opposite to a lofty pile of wood. The grand inquisitor, surrounded by the other judges and

and officers of that iniquitous tribunal, occupied the principal throne, whilst on the least splendid sat the Portuguese monarch, with the royal family, and courtiers upon the benches on each side of him.

The windows of the houses were crowded with ladies sumptuously dressed—the very roofs were covered with spectators; an host of priests filled the air with their canticles — the incense smoked and ascended in clouds towards the sky.; the thirty victims were chained to the pile—fire was set to the wood, and nothing was heard but the crackling of the flames, mingled with the piercing screams and doleful groans of the sufferers.

Whilst a nation, degraded almost to brutality by superstition and fanaticism,  
contemplated

contemplated with the affectation of piety the most barbarous of exhibitions and of sacrifices, Edmund arrived at donna Lucia's, and was speedily in the arms of his Selina, who had concluded that he was lost to her for ever, and whom he found bitterly bewailing her misfortune, and the unknown perils to which she imagined him to be exposed.

Every one trembled at Edmund's account of what he had experienced and seen; and the eyes of Amelina and her lover were suffused with tears of pity at the melancholy fate of the unfortunate but faithful and courageous Beatrix, who had served them with so much zeal and affection during their residence in the convent, and who now fell another victim

victim of the persecutions and implacable hatred of their enemy.

The time passed very slowly and tediously in the opinion of Amelina, who blushed not to confess that the delay of her marriage was the cause of it; but as the great heat of the weather abated, the cool breezes of September gave fresh energy to her mind.

She occupied an elegant little apartment that looked into a spacious garden, whose verdure, freshened by the autumnal showers, particularly gratified her; and before she retired to bed, she usually passed some time at her window, enjoying the freshness of the air, and occupied in the review of the singular events that had chequered her short life.

She was thus employed one moonlight

light evening, when her attention was attracted by a tall woman dressed in white, who quitting a tufted grove, slowly advanced along one of the open walks in the garden. She heaved long and frequent sighs, and seating herself upon a bench not far from Amelina's window, raised her eyes to Heaven, and sang a ballad that seemed to be a short history of her misfortunes, and terminated in the hope that death would soon relieve her.

The daughter of Leontio was forcibly struck by these melancholy accents; she was confident that she had heard the voice before, but wasunable to recall to mind the place or circumstances; and whilst she was endeavouring to recollect, the lady arose, and returning towards the grove, presently disappeared.

Amelina

Amelina was strongly impressed with the persuasion that she was acquainted with the stranger, whose life seemed a tissue of misfortunes ; and resolving to do all in her power to alleviate them, she the next morning repaired to the house to which the garden belonged, and was informed that a foreign lady had lodged there only two days, whose affliction seemed very great, and who took scarcely any thing to support her life, which would probably soon be terminated, as she was extremely weak, and in a continual state of suffering and anguish.

Unable to resist the desire of succouring a fellow-creature in distress, Amelina requested to be conducted to her; but great were both her surprise and consternation, when in the pale and meagre

meagre countenance of the stranger she recognized the novice Rosalina, whom she had left in the convent of Santa Maria.

**CHAP-**

CHAPTER V.  
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AFTER embracing each other with the warmest marks of friendship and regard —“ By what chance,” said Amelina, “ are you now at Lisbon—you, whom I thought a nun in the convent of Santa Maria ?”

“ I will tell you presently,” replied the novice, with a sigh; “ but I must first collect all the strength that is yet left me. Heaven has listened to my wishes—I prayed that I might see you again before I died, and my sorrowing heart is satisfied.”

After

After a few moments passed in silence, she thus resumed.—“What will be your amazement, my dear Amelina, upon learning my name and family! Have you ever heard much of your mother’s family de Montval?”

“ Oh yes; but how know you——”

“ One question more. Did you ever hear any thing about the sister of your mother, the unfortunate Clementia?”

“ Yes—I have been told that she left her father’s house, and was never heard of afterwards.”

“ Well then, Amelina, that sister of Clementia—that lost daughter of the count de Montval, now appears before you.”

“ Is it possible?” exclaimed Amelina, attentively considering her—“ are you indeed

indeed my mother's sister, whose evasion caused such uneasiness in the family?"

"Listen, my child, and I will presently convince you. I was very young when Leontio de Villa-Flora was introduced to my father; but he made too deep an impression upon my heart ever to be effaced. I soon perceived that he paid infinite attention to my sister, and it was not long before she told me that he had disclosed his passion with the greatest tenderness and delicacy, and that she had agreed to receive his addresses, provided they were countenanced by her father. Judge, Amelina, how this confidence affected a heart devoted to the adoration of Leontio: but it was necessary for me to conceal my disappointment and despair, and even to congratulate Clem-

tia

tia on the happiness of her prospects. Not a day passed without her talking to me of her interviews with Leontio, and of their intended union; it seemed as if she designedly redoubled my pain, and proposed to see me perish by degrees, though no such idea was in her mind, as she loved me with the tenderest affection, and ever treated me with kindness.

"At length Gonsalez, the father of Leontio, arrived at Paris, and every thing being arranged for the marriage of Clementia, it speedily took place. I know not what prevented me from bending under the weight of my sorrows; the man whom I adored was eternally separated from me—he was become the husband of my sister; and this idea incessantly preyed upon my mind. The hap-

py pair returning soon afterwards to Portugal; I was driven almost to despair.

‘What?’ cried I, ‘shall I no more see him?—shall I no longer breathe the same air with the object of my tenderest affections? An immense distance must then divide me from him for ever? Such a sacrifice is far above my strength—I cannot submit to it; I will follow him—I will abandon every thing for his sake! But Clementia’s happiness shall never be disturbed; all that I desire is, to live concealed near the place of his abode, and to draw my last breath in that country, which I shall adopt instead of my own.’

“Having thus determined to follow Leontio and his bride, I sold some valuable diamonds that had been bequeathed me by a relative; and one night I quitted

quitted my father's house, and fled to Lisbon, with all the necessary precautions to hinder my being discovered. My passion for Leontio was unsuspected; and my arrangements, against detection, were made with such prudence, that no traces of my journey or concealment ever came to light, and my father concluded that I was no more. I lay hid at Lisbon under a feigned name, and in an obscure lodging near the habitation of Leontio; and whilst my loss was deplored by my family, I had frequently the satisfaction of seeing, unobserved, the object of the sacrifice I had made.

"When he established himself at Vila-Flor, I also quitted Lisbon, and fixed myself at Aveiro, where, though I saw him but seldom, my heart felt gratified at the idea of Leontio being near me.

" I will not wound your feelings, my sweet girl, by dwelling upon the fatal moment that deprived you of a father : it was indeed a dreadful occurrence, and had nearly consigned me to the grave ; but Heaven ordained that I should survive, and that my indiscretion should still further be chastised. A great degree of languor was the result of the shock I had felt ; my mind and constitution were so shaken, that I was long incapable of employment, and I shed torrents of tears, almost without knowing the cause that drew them from me.

" When I recovered my strength, I resolved to consecrate the remainder of my days to penitence, and to expiate the passion over which I thought I had triumphed, but which, far from being subdued, has long survived the amiable

Leontio

Leontio who was the object of it. The convent of Santa Maria, whose abbess enjoyed the reputation of a saint, was the chosen place of my seclusion, and I selected it on account of its neighbourhood to Villa-Flora. Although the abbess received me with cordiality, and treated me with kindness, she omitted no opportunity of finding out my name, and the reasons for my sequestering myself in the convent; but I obstinately persisted in my reserve, and all her stratagems were ineffectual.

"Upon the day fixed for my taking the veil, I accidentally cast my eyes upon the crowd assembled in the church, and perceived a young person who bore such a striking resemblance to my sister, that notwithstanding I had been informed of her unhappy death, I was con-

vineed it was Clementina herself; and I was unable to bear the shock that I experienced on the occasion. You know what passed afterwards, and how agitated I was on hearing you sing the ballad of *Ires de Castro*; I thought I heard the accents of Leontio, and the illusion was the more complete, from my having formerly heard him sing the very same ballad, in strains similar to your own. Theresa had told me that you were the daughter of Leontio; and the idea of having near me the sole offspring of a man whose memory I worshipped; and of a sister whom I had affectionately loved and sincerely regretted, greatly contributed to my agitation, and the weakness that resulted from it.

"Very soon after my establishment at Santa Maria, I had distinguished that

most

most of the virtues which the abbess so ostentatiously displayed were very far from genuine; but as her attentions to me were uniformly kind, I continued in the resolution of terminating my existence in the monastery. From her I learned that donna Lucia had intrusted you to her care during a long journey that obliged her to quit Portugal for some time, and I could not help pitying your situation, as young persons generally dislike being confined, and as it appeared to me that you were less calculated than any other for such a continuance of restraint.

"I was at first strongly inclined to acquaint you with our near connexion; but upon reflecting that by doing so I should necessarily be obliged to intrust to you the history of my errors and mis-

fortunes, I determined to remain silent; and the dread of my secret becoming known to the abbess confirmed me in my resolution. I felt, however, great satisfaction in shewing you all the kindnesses in my power, although I plainly perceived that they were not always welcome, and that I disturbed your conversations with Fidelia."

Amelina's cheeks were here suffused with blushes, and her confusion was extreme; but without seeming to notice it, her aunt proceeded.—“ Some circumstances at length leading me to suspect that the young novice was not what she appeared, I resolved to leave you as little as possible together, and shortly after was convinced that my suspicions were well-founded; for I overheard at the church-door the whole of your conversation

tion with Florello. You ought not to be dissatisfied with my intentions, for my object was to prevent the evil consequences of your mutual indiscretion, and I particularly wished to conceal the mystery from the abbess, whose vengeance would have fallen heavily upon you both. I therefore observed your movements with increased vigilance and attention: it was I who took away the note you had left so carelessly in your table-drawer—I overheard your discourse in the chapel, and the perusal of Edmund's letter to his friend—I listened in the garden to the interesting account of your subterraneous journey, and what you had seen in the Castle of Villa-Flora; finally, I had the good fortune to discover that the abbess had detected your projects, and I even heard her mention

her design of sending to Aveiro for the alguázils. Determined, if possible, to save you, and not knowing in what part of the garden you were, I traversed great part of it, singing a few lines alluding to the danger of your situation; and I had the happiness of finding and preserving you.

“Furious at your escape, the abbess denounced you to the Inquisition, and was taking measures for your apprehension, when the inquisitor-general signified to her that all proceedings against you and your accomplices were stopped by an order from the crown. This disappointment at first enraged, and afterwards soured the temper of the abbess, who finding herself the subject of censure, and deprived of the esteem and veneration of the public, revenged herself upon

upon the nuns by the harshness of her treatment, and told me that I must resolve upon immediately terminating a noviciate that had already lasted but too long.

‘It is terminated already, madam,’ I replied, ‘for I am confident that a monastic life will suit neither my health nor my disposition; so that I must request your permission to leave the convent, and must entreat you to receive my warmest thanks for your kindnesses during my continuance in it.’

‘To this I received no answer, but the abbess quitted me with an indignant air, and four lay sisters appeared, who conducted me into the prison destined for the refractory nuns, where Beatrix soon afterwards brought me some bread and water—sole nourishment of the unhappy

victims of monastic wrath. Upon her returning the next morning with a similar pittance, she informed me that the abbess had summoned the most antiquated members of the community, who at her instigation had condemned me to perpetual confinement, for having contributed to your escape. Terrified at this intelligence, I threw myself upon my knees before Beatrix, who was so affected by my anguish and entreaties, that she consented to liberate and fly with me. Faithful to her promise, the good Beatrix came to me in the night, and escaping through the church, we repaired to Aveiro, where we found a vessel ready to sail for Lisbon, and in a short time reached that capital without accident.

"Having pitched upon lodgings in a retired part of the city, we remained unmolested

molested during several days; but Beatrix went out one morning to purchase provisions, and never returned; and I have with sorrow seen several months pass by without hearing any tidings of her; neither have I ventured to take any public measures concerning her, lest I should again fall into the power of the vindictive abbess, or the unrelenting Inquisition, to which she has probably denounced me. I was two days since under the necessity of quitting my lodgings, when I removed hither; but my health is so much impaired, that it is likely I shall not long be an inhabitant of this world. I possess but a small portion of the breath of life, and I feel that in a short time it will be entirely exhausted."

As soon as Rosalina had terminated
her

her melancholy story, Amelina, with all possible precaution, informed her of the cruel sufferings and exit of poor Beatrice ; but she had no sooner mentioned the terrible catastrophe, than Rosalina, casting upon her niece a look of consternation and wildness, exclaimed—“Oh God ! then I have caused thy death—poor harmless Beatrice ! Why did I involve thee in my misfortunes ? I cannot survive this last, this tremendous blow. All-powerful Being ! deign to forgive the errors of my youth—deign to look down upon me with mercy and compassion ; I am going to appear before thee with the remorse of having caused the death of a humane and worthy creature. Ah ! my grief will suffocate me—I cannot breathe—I must expire.”

She then fell lifeless at the feet of
Amelina,

Amelina, whose screams collected the people of the house, some of whom ran directly for a physician; but when he arrived, and had visited the unfortunate Rosalina, who lay stretched out upon the floor, he declared that she had terminated her existence, and that a sudden shock had been the occasion of her death; and the dissection of the body confirmed the justness of his opinion.

In the meanwhile, Amelina was conveyed to donna Lucia's, in a state bordering upon despair: an alarming delirium took place; she reproached herself with having pointed the dart at the bosom of Rosalina, and loaded herself with the most odious appellations. The affliction of Florello and her other friends was proportioned to the danger of their beloved Amelina: but her sound constitution,

tion, and the assistance of the medical art, at length relieved her from her perilous situation; and when she had recovered her senses, and part of that strength of which a burning and unremitting fever had deprived her, she related to donna Lucia the adventures of the unhappy sister of the still more unfortunate Clementia.

Whilst Florello united his tears with those of Amelina for the loss of a relative, who, but for the persecutions of the inveterate and wicked abbess, might have passed in happiness the evening of her life, donna Lucia and her other friends besought her to set bounds to her affliction, and in a short time produced the effect they had desired. Each day diminished the bitterness of Amelina's sorrow; but she preserved to the last a profound

found veneration for the memory of one who had been the victim of too much sensibility and unguarded love on the one hand, and of unbounded tyranny and vengeance on the other.

Selina now experienced the greatest uneasiness; for, convinced as she was of her father's affection for her, and of the natural goodness of his heart, she persuaded herself that he must be dangerously ill, since she had received no answer to any of her letters. Fearing, however, to vex her husband by disclosing her apprehensions, she endeavoured to appear cheerful in his presence; but by concealing her anxiety she considerably added to its violence.

The day fixed for the marriage of Amelina drew nigh, and Florello, almost at the height of his wishes, occupied himself

~~THE~~ CASTLE OF VILLA-FLORA.

self in preparation for the wedding, and thus tried to charm an impatience which became the more difficult to restrain as the happy hour approached. He took great pleasure in the decoration of the nuptial chamber, which was hung with sky-blue satin, embroidered with gold, and besprinkled with spangles; garlands of artificial roses were elegantly disposed around, and mirrors, surrounded by a foliage of green and gold, were so distributed as incessantly to reflect every object. In an alcove, partly shaded by festoons of flowers, was placed the marriage-bed, richly embroidered, and fringed with gold, and surmounted by a groupe in alabaster, of exquisite workmanship, representing the union of Love and Hymen, whom the god of Mystery covered with a veil.

At

At length Florello was on the eve of the day that was to entitle him to share with his beloved the apartment which his amorous anticipation had prepared with so much taste; and his happiness was such that he every instant feared a reverse. Having after supper conducted his Amelina to the chamber that she was to occupy for the last time, they staid conversing at the window that looked into the garden. It was exactly a month since, at the same time, Amelina had there heard the voice of her unhappy suitor, and this recollection occasioned her an involuntary tremor.

Whilst Florello was talking with the animated tenderness natural to a bridegroom who had been so often disappointed, he suddenly stopped, in order to direct Amelina's attention to something white

white that seemed issuing out of a dark alley. This object, which appeared to grow larger as it approached, stopped exactly opposite to the window, and under its ample white drapery, disclosed the bust of a skeleton, with eyes that, burning in the sockets, afforded light sufficient for the examination of its horrid form. It then, with a long wand, traced upon the sand, in characters of fire, the following warning, which the terrified and astonished lovers read without difficulty :—

“ Amelina! I am the ghost of Clementia, thy unfortunate mother. I have quitted for a few moments the tomb in which I repose, in order to inform thee that a secret that interests thy happiness, thy safety, and thy Florello, is to be revealed to thee. Repair to the convent

of

of Belem*, inquire for father Pancrazio, disclose to him thy name—he alone can answer thy inquiries. Oh, my beloved daughter, disobey me not!—the greatest misfortunes will otherwise befall thee."

The characters having presently disappeared, and the phantom being lost in darkness—"Oh, Florello!" said Amelina, throwing herself into his arms, "you have seen, as I have, the plaintive shade of my mother—you have perused her commands: ought I to hesitate about executing them?"

"I am far from opposing it," answered Florello, with an agitated voice; "but,

* Belem is a considerable town upon the Tagus, about six miles from Lisbon, and contains a magnificent convent of Hyeronimites, in whose church are the burial vaults of the royal family of Portugal.

"but, oh Heaven! is it possible that the dead can quit their sepulchres? Ah! if I had not been witness of such an occurrence, no asseverations could ever have convinced me of it. But, after all, may not our eyes have deceived us? and is it not an illusion of the imagination?"

"No," replied Amelina, "I am very certain that my eyes have not deceived me. Florello, let us not despise the advice that Heaven designs to send us; but let us execute to-morrow what we are ordered, even though it should retard our marriage for a day."

"Let us go and consult donna Lucia," said Florello, "and abide by her decision."

Donna Lucia was very far from being superstitious; but when the incident had

been

been reported to her, she was persuaded that the warning was supernatural, and consequently advised her niece and Florello to go to the convent at Belem the next day.

It was with extreme reluctance that the impatient youth consented to postpone to another day the accomplishment of a marriage which had already been so frequently thwarted ; but, yielding to the entreaties of Amelina, who forgot her own wishes in the awful warnings of her mother, he attended her to Belem, accompanied by Edmund, who was anxious for the developement of a mystery that so materially concerned the happiness of his friends.

Having reached the convent at noon, whilst the monks were engaged in the refectory, they inquired for father Pancrazio,

crazio, and having waited until he had dined, they were ushered into a cell, in which they found a venerable old man.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER Pancrazio appeared to be about eighty years old; his bald head, his strong features little furrowed by wrinkles, and his snow-white beard that descended in curly profusion upon his garments, gave him that respect-inspiring air which old age seldom fails to impress, and which the garb of an austere order considerably augmented.

"What are your wishes, my children?" said he, in a solemn voice.

"Father, I am Amelina de Villa-Flora."

"Ah!" replied the monk, "I well know then what occasions me this visit. Heaven has deigned to inform me in the secret manner. I can in truth acquaint you with secrets that will astonish you. There is no one in the world but myself who can reveal them to you; but as the subject requires profound meditation, it is impossible that I can disclose them to you to-day. But, my dear child, if you will come to-morrow evening at eight o'clock to the church-door, I will unveil to you these wondrous mysteries; and those cavaliers may accompany you, for I shall be rejoiced to have them as witnesses of what I shall discover to you."

When he had ceased speaking, Amelina assured him that she would punctually meet him with her two friends; and saluting

saluting the venerable monk, she quitted his cell with her companions.

"Florello," she said, "let not the promise I have made inspire you with apprehensions of delay; I am equally determined to be yours to-morrow morning; our marriage need not prevent us from going to the convent at the hour appointed by the monk."

"And I see no reason," answered Florello, kissing her hand with transport, "why we should not return to Lisbon time enough for supper."

They were joined in opinion by donna Lucia, who finding that the advice given by the phantom had been verified as far as regarded father Pancrazio, deemed it right not to neglect a matter of such importance.

At length the joyful moment arrived

when Love was to be crowned by Hymen, and constancy was to be rewarded by happiness as pure as unalterable. In the prime of her youth and beauty, Amelina repaired to the church, leaning upon the arm of Edmund; she wore a gown of white taffeta, symbol of innocence and virtue; her fine hair, elegantly turned up behind, played around her face in a thousand ringlets; a crown of myrtle ornamented her head; her sparkling eyes were modestly cast down, and her countenance and deportment characterized the purity of her mind. The marriage vow was solemnly pronounced at the altar; and at the embarrassed utterance of the long-desired affirmative that was to gratify the wishes of Florello, Amelina joined her trembling hand to his. Enchanting moment! a

cold

cold description cannot adequately express it.

After the ceremony the happy pair returned to donna Lucia's, with countenances that fully denoted their satisfaction; and after an elegant, but private entertainment, they set off for Belem, accompanied by Edmund. They waited but a few minutes at the church-door for father Pancrazio, who having applauded their punctuality, desired them to follow him; and to preserve the most profound silence. They then entered the church, which was spacious and of a gloomy grandeur; and the incense that was burning, added to the sacred horror of that majestic edifice.

Stopping suddenly in front of the high altar, the monk turned round, and looking steadily upon the party that follow-

ed—"Before you proceed," said he, with a terrifying voice, "swear that you will not divulge any thing that passes."

"Father," answered Florello, "I am a gentleman and a Castilian; is not my word sufficient for the whole?"

"It is well," answered the monk; "after what you have said, I fear not to inform you that I possess in an eminent degree an astonishing science, which, though ancient as the world, is known by only a small number of persons. This science, vulgarly called magic, has nothing criminal in it; we owe it to the infinite goodness of the Creator, who has permitted us to exercise the means of subjugating rebellious nature, and taming the infernal spirits."

Amelina having turned pale at the word magic—"Take courage, my child," pursued

pursued Pancrazio, “I repeat to you that the science is in no wise criminal—for if it were so, I assuredly would never practise it. Our prior, who knows the innocence of the methods I employ, has long permitted me to use them; but as the Inquisition, and a prejudiced and narrow-minded public, might not perhaps be of the same opinion, it is remote from their curiosity that I have always exercised my art. I am never happier than when I can practise it as usefully as I purpose doing now; for thus occupied, I know that I fulfil the decrees of Heaven.”

Having thus spoken, the old man lighted a taper at the lamp that constantly burned before the altar, and opening a small door at the farther end of the choir, he descended about twenty

steps, followed by the young people, who had been much surprised at his harangue upon the magic art. At the bottom of the steps they found themselves in a spacious vault, from whose fretted roof hung several lamps, of which the only one that was burning cast a gloomy light upon the walls and pillars, that were painted black, and covered with death's heads, whose extreme whiteness formed a singular contrast; and the marble pavement was strewn with inscriptions in the Gothic style and character.

"Stay here a few moments—I shall be with you again presently," said the monk, who passed through a narrow door opposite to the steps, but quickly came back in so extraordinary a costume, that it was difficult to recognize him. Instead of his monastic dress, he wore a

long brown tunic, trimmed with a broad band of crimson velvet, covered with all sorts of grotesque figures embroidered in gold; his loins were girded by a yellow sash wrought with silver, whose fringed ends trailed upon the ground; upon his head he wore a small black cap ornamented with feathers, and in his hand was an ivory wand.

After exhorting his spectators not to be alarmed, either at the methods he was about to employ, or at the prodigies that would ensue, he required the names of Florello and Amelina, the days of their respective births, and a few drops of their blood. "You need only make a slight puncture in the finger," said the monk, "with this golden needle, which is peculiarly calculated for the purpose."

Having done as he required, the blood

was received into a small cup, in which was already some other liquid; and whilst he was mixing it, he again recommended fortitude and silence, and proceeded to his magical incantations. Drawing out of a box a piece of vellum, he traced upon it several words with the liquor out of the cup; after which he took out two sculls and several human bones, some poniards half-consumed by rust, a bloody shroud, some long hair clotted with blood and dirt, and a sort of sepulchral urn. When he had distributed these horrid objects in mysterious order around the talismanic vellum, he placed Florello, Amelina, and Edmund, at some distance from each other against the wall, and enjoined them to remain motionless and silent. He then with his wand described around each of them a semicircle, which

which at first appeared all on fire, but was presently extinguished.

On a sudden the eyes of the magician seemed to flash forth fire; and with a hollow voice he pronounced an invocation for the demons to attend him, and declare the will of fate; he then brandished his wand, the lamp was extinguished, the spectators remained in total darkness, and a sharp whistling sound was heard in the vault.—“The charm is accomplished,” exclaimed the monk; and instantly a countless number of flames arose out of the earth, and were carried about the vault, and winged sculls with fiery eyes flew around and made a noise with their wings resembling that made by bats. When those had disappeared, the astonished trio saw, at a vast distance, a white spot, which as it gradually approached,

developed itself in a most extraordinary manner, and there issued from it a man and woman clad in white, and holding each other by the hand. Their countenances were extremely pale; each had near the heart a large wound streaming with blood, with which their garments were stained, and upon labels round their foreheads were distinctly seen the names of Leontio and Clementia.

They looked at Amelina with eyes of tenderness, and seemed desirous of approaching her, but an invincible force withheld them; and having suddenly grown to an immeasurable size, they vanished like the lightest smoke, and in their stead arose a sarcophagus bearing the following inscription:—

“They are no more—this monument contains their ashes.”

Whilst

Whilst Amelina wept at the perusal of these melancholy words, a frightful noise was heard, and again every thing disappeared; but a new object presented itself to view—a splendid dome, supported by an immense number of columns, upon which were reflected, as in a prism, the most brilliant colours of the rainbow; its radiant arches arose to a prodigious height, the sweetest odours perfumed the air, an ethereal symphony enraptured the soul by its harmonious and enchanting sounds, and every thing breathed pleasure and delight. The dome opening at the summit, a cloud was seen to descend, in the centre of which was a child in the costume and with the features of a Cupid; it was followed by a black and winged figure, that seemed eagerly to pursue it; but the cloud vanished,

ence; they perished by the hand of violence, as was indicated by the wounds which they exhibited. The sarcophagus announces that their remains repose together in a spot with which you are acquainted. The dome that succeeded to it designates the palace of happiness, into which the god of love had found access; but pursued by an evil genius, he fled. The church is the symbol of a marriage about to be accomplished; whether it will be so or not, I cannot decide, being ignorant whether the god of love, or the angel of darkness was triumphant. But, alas! I fear the influence of the infernal powers. I have nothing more to tell you; if you wish, however, to know the sequel, I exhort you to return here to-morrow at the same hour, when I may perhaps recommence my operations

with

with more success; but before you leave me to-night, I hope you will do me the honour to partake of some refreshments that I have prepared for you."

Although the party were desirous of returning home, the old man entreated them too earnestly for them to resist without offending him; and they therefore followed him to an adjoining cell, splendidly illuminated, where they found a table covered with fruit, pastry, sweet-meats, and a variety of wines.

After partaking of the delicacies that were offered them, the venerable monk presented them with some liqueur, which he extolled as particularly fine; but Amelina had not long emptied her glass before a thick mist obscured her sight, she yawned several times, closed her eyes, and fell back in her chair in a profound

found sleep. Edmund and Florello endeavoured to speak to her, and to assist her; but their lips vainly attempted to form sounds—their tongues refused their office, and sleep gained upon them as suddenly as forcibly.

The rays of the morning sun falling upon Edmund awakened him; yawning, stretching himself, and rubbing his eyes, he looked round him with astonishment. An extraordinary murmur reached his ears, and on rising, he discovered with amazement the banks of the Tagus, and the lofty towers of Belém. He now recollects with surprise and consternation that he had fallen asleep the preceding evening in the church of the Hyeronimites, after drinking a glass of liqueur of an extraordinary flavour, and that Florello and his bride had

had done the same. Not seeing them near him, he suspected that his sudden drowsiness must have been caused by the commission of some perfidious crime; and hastening to the convent, he inquired for father Pancrazio, but learned with sorrow and dismay that he had quitted it during the night. He then desired to be conducted into the cell, in the hopes of finding some clue to his researches; but those hopes were baffled—he saw nothing but the remains of the refreshments, and other uninteresting objects.

Augusto, who had remained with the carriage at a short distance from the convent, with orders to wait the arrival of his master and his friends, continued there until daylight, when supposing that they had returned to Lisbon by water,

water, he repaired without farther inquiry to the capital.

Terrified and in despair at the alarming circumstances that had occurred, Edmund hastened to donna Lucia, whom he found with Selina, in a state of the greatest uneasiness. With tears of grief and indignation he related to them every thing that had passed, accused himself of having occasioned the destruction of Florello and Amelina, and in the excess of his affliction, declared that he would not survive them; but Selina threw herself into his arms, and her caresses and entreaties, joined to the supplications of donna Lucia, at length calmed the agitation of his mind, and induced him to think it would be most prudent instantly to take measures for the pursuit of Pancrazio, and the safety of the unhappy

py couple, who, he feared, had fallen a sacrifice to the wiles and wickedness of the atrocious and implacable Theresa.

CHAPTER VII.

IT is impossible to describe the amazement and vexation of the count de Montval, when upon his return to St. Cloud, he discovered the elopement of his daughter and Amelina. Unable to form any probable surmise as to the cause and intention of their flight, he was some hours before he could learn any thing concerning them; but having at length been informed that two young ladies, accompanied by two gentlemen, had quitted St. Cloud with four post-horses, on the very night that Selina and her cousin

cousin had left the house, he thought it useless to attempt any pursuit, and waited with anxious expectation till Selina should herself inform him of the motives that had impelled her to such an extraordinary step.

The unhappy father's thoughts continually turned upon his daughter, upon her for whom he had made so many sacrifices. She whom he had so fondly cherished now abandoned him; and she who but lately seemed ready to lay down her life for her father, now contributed to the unhappiness of his old age. The idea of such ingratitude, or rather of a change so sudden and so cruel, chagrined his heart and embittered every moment of his existence. He sometimes thought also of Amelina, for whom he had shewn the kindness of a father, who now fled from

from him, and who perhaps might have counselled the elopement of his daughter.

These melancholy ideas made such an impression upon monsieur de Montval, and caused such a fermentation in his blood, as occasioned an illness of a more dangerous nature than that from which he so lately was recovered. When the letters from Edmund and Selina arrived, his situation was so alarming, that it was deemed necessary to suppress them for the present; and the physicians were unanimously of opinion that they should not be given to him till he was in an advanced state of convalescence.

Several months passed on before that happy event took place, when on perusing his daughter's letters, he was gratified to excess on finding that she had never ceased to entertain for him the same

same filial affection and tenderness, and that timidity and embarrassment, the result of a momentary error, had alone induced her to avoid him.—“Ah!” said he to his attendants, “why have you so long deprived me of these letters? Their salutary balm would have contributed to my recovery more than all other remedies; for since I have regained my Selina, and found her worthy of my love and esteem, my complaints are terminated, and I feel myself strong enough to set out for Lisbon and embrace her.”

The next day the count was so much recovered, and expressed such anxiety to see his daughter, that the physicians thought the journey might be undertaken, not only without danger, but even with advantage to his health; and having procured letters to the French mi-

nister at the court of his most faithful majesty, he set off for Portugal, in less than a week after the perusal of the letters from his daughter.

Whilst Edmund consulted with donna Lucia upon the most efficacious methods of discovering the retreat of the vile Pancrazio, and of rescuing Florello and Amelina from the perils they incurred, he accidentally put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and pulled out a sealed paper, which he opened and read with precipitation:—

“ Segnor, I have long known every thing that relates to the unfortunate family of Villa-Flora. Although I belong to Sebaldino’s troop of banditti, I am not destitute of humanity, and I

every

every day feel myself more averse to an employment which necessity only obliged me to adopt. I must now tell you that Sebaldino and the abbess Theresa have formed a plan for carrying off your friends, and that it is so well arranged as to insure their success. If I had been acquainted with it sooner, I would have prevented you from coming to Belem, but I was informed too late of the secret of our expedition. The bloody-minded Sebaldino has ordered you to be thrown into the Tagus; but I am determined to save you at all hazards. The perusal of the inclosed copy of a letter written by Sebaldino to the abbess will at once explain their plot, and point out the means of saving your friends; but no time is to be lost. God prosper your endeavours!

ANTONIO."

L 2

Edmund

Edmund then read the contents of the following copy of a letter from Sebaldino :—

“ Bravo, my dear marchioness ! the day is our own—the objects of your deserved vengeance cannot escape me, as you will see by the account of my manœuvres to draw them into my net. You know that in compliance with your wishes, I took a lodging close to donna Lucia’s, for the purpose of watching her movements, and that I thus became informed of the return of Amelina and her associates. Having already told you of my astonishment in finding the daughter of Leontio to be no other than the person whom, under the name of Octavio, I had condemned to be hanged on board

board the Intrepid, I shall dwell upon it no longer, but inform you that I immediately began to prepare my measures for carrying off that little vagabond and her lover, whose babbling might expose you to such fatal consequences. By a singular accident, unnecessary to detail, I met a brother whom I had concluded to be long since dead, not having heard any thing from him for many years. You never were acquainted with him, but you will recollect hearing me mention my brother count Stephani, who sold his property in Sicily, and resided in another part of Italy. Having committed several murders, and being tormented, as he has just told me, by remorse, he resolved to expiate his crimes by entering into an austere order of monks; and travelling to Lisbon, he became one

of the Hyeronimites at Belem, under the appellation of Pancrazio,

" His religious fervour having subsided (for we grow weary of every thing in time), his regret at having quitted the world soon exceeded and banished his remorse; but there was no alternative, and he was obliged to submit to the confinement he had imposed upon himself. As nature, however, had given him an active and penetrating mind, he endeavoured to charm his solitude and disappointment by intense application to the sciences, and to natural philosophy in particular, in which he soon made considerable progress; and having taken great pains to discover the means employed by the sorcerers of antiquity to produce their magical illusions, he attained to such perfection as to create effects

fects in appearance most surprising, though the cause was as simple as it was natural *.

"The superior of the convent, a man of taste, and fond of science, encouraged my brother's pursuits as far as he was able; and in order to avoid the interference of the Inquisition, recommended to him the secret exercise of his talents and acquirements, for which purpose he permitted him to practise them in the vaults of the conventional church, that are destined to receive the earthly remains of the sovereigns of Portugal.

"After the mutual communication of our adventures, I proposed to Stephani

L 4 to

* Pancrazio, who was deeply versed in optics and catroptics, employed, in the production of the prodigies described in the last chapter, nearly the same means as those used by the professors of phantasmagoria.

to quit his convent, and promised to insure him an agreeable retirement, where he might enjoy the most perfect tranquillity, secure from the persecution of the monks, upon condition that he would assist me in the enterprise which I explained to him. Delighted at the idea of terminating his days far from the prison that he abhorred, my brother eagerly entered into the project which I am about to lay before you, and we agreed that it should be executed without delay:

“ It being necessary for our success that Amelina and Florello should go to Belem and consult Pancrazio, I undertook to impel them to it by the following stratagem, which I founded on frequently seeing Amelina at a window that looked into a garden where I had the privilege of walking. Stephani
having

having formed some pasteboard into the shape and appearance of a spectre, I fastened it round me, and placing myself before the astonished eyes of the lovers, who were tenderly engaged at the window, with a cane whose hollow was filled with phosphorus, I wrote upon the sand, in luminous characters, that I was the shade of Clementia de Villa-Flora, and signified an order for them to repair to father Pancrazio at the convent at Belem. Every thing has succeeded to the extent of our wishes, and Stephani is now occupied in representing a magic scene, with which he thought it necessary to amuse his guests till the night should be sufficiently advanced for the secure execution of our project. A slight repast awaits them, after which a powerful soporific, in the guise of a glass of

liqueur, will so lull their senses that we shall convey them without noise or resistance to a carriage that awaits us.

"Our faithful Otho will set off with this letter as soon as we are all clear of the convent, and as he is well mounted, he will reach you in time for you to make the requisite arrangements. Edmund de Vellanès, who assisted your enemies in escaping from Santa Maria, being of the party on the visit to Panocrazio, I have ordered Antonio to throw him into the Tagus.—I am diverted at the idea of Amelina's surprise on finding herself in my power; for she is as much convinced that I went to the bottom, as I was till lately that she perished with the Intrepid. Farewell, Theresa! I am ever your devoted

SEBALDINO.

"P.S. I omitted to say that Ame-

lia

Lina was this very morning united to Florello. I shall arrange their nuptial couch."

"Wicked, nefarious villain!" exclaimed Edmund, furiously; "and hell has not yet swallowed thee up! What a complication of crimes and enormities! This Stephani, who assuredly is the same monster that in one night murdered seven innocent persons in his house in Lombardy, as mentioned to us by Amelina—this execrable wretch has been permitted to live during many years, in order afterwards to meet with a brother as detestable and bloody-minded as himself, whom he joins in the most horrid projects against us innocent and unsuspecting. Why is it that Providence suffers

such atrocious crimes? But, signora Lucia, we have no time to lose. If we delay, your niece and my cousin may be out of the reach of our assistance; let us therefore throw ourselves at the feet of his majesty—let him read the letters containing the details of their intended wickedness, and he will surely grant us an order for pursuing and punishing the authors of it——”

He was interrupted by Marcelosa opening the door, and informing donna Lucia that a foreign gentleman desired to be admitted; and upon his being introduced, Selina no sooner saw him than she fell back in her chair and nearly fainted.

“ Oh, my daughter!” exclaimed the count de Montval, “ my dearest Selina! does the sight of your father make such an impression upon you?” At the same time

time he clasped her to his bosom, whilst tears flowed down his venerable cheeks.

"Sir," said Edmund, "let me entreat you to tell your daughter that you forgive her; the accents of a voice so justly revered will speedily restore her. If any one deserve your anger, it is I—I alone am culpable—I seduced her from her duty, and it is I who am her husband."

"Selina," cried the count, "my dearest child! I forgive you—you are still and have never ceased to be cherished by me as the daughter of my heart."

"Ah, my father," said Selina, gently, "you deign then to forgive me? And yet I have so cruelly offended you! But I conjure you not to confine your goodness to me alone!—be as generous as I have been faulty—pardon my Edmund, my husband, the father of my child!"

"Yes,"

"Yes," answered the count, with tenderness, "yes: whoever you are, you who have robbed me of my Selina—since she is your wife—since she is likely to be a mother, come to my arms; I adopt—I acknowledge you for my son."

Edmund, obeying the impulse of his heart, was instantly in the arms of the count, who pressed his children to his breast; and donna Lucia contemplated with delight and sensibility the effusions of paternal tenderness and filial affection.

"My dearest father," said Selina, suddenly, "forgive me, if I at this interesting moment inquire not what has happened to you since we parted; but our sweet Amelina is threatened with imminent dangers, and the most alarming perils

rits surround her as well as Florello, to whom she was but yesterday united. Let us endeavour to extricate them from the torments and death that are prepared for them."

Having then in few words related what had passed, her father starting up — "My son," said he to Edmund, " follow me; we will speedily obtain the necessary orders for the deliverance of the unhappy victims of that execrable abbess."

"Yes," added donna Lucia, "and at the same time I trust you will break the fetters of my poor Leontio."

"Of Leontio? What say you? Is it possible, signora, that he is yet alive?"

"I have no doubt of it; but in the name of Heaven let us lose no time in explanations!"

The

The count de Montval immediately went out with Edmund, and in two hours they returned with a royal mandate, empowering the bearer to use such measures as he should judge expedient, both in the convent of Santa Maria and in the Castle of Villa-Flora, and to demand as many officers of justice as he should deem requisite for the success of his undertaking.

"My dear Selina," said Edmund, "the carriage is at the door, and we must immediately set off with donna Lucia. In your present situation it is not possible for you to accompany us; but as I am aware of your anxiety and impatience, I will in two days send back Augusto, and on the third you may begin your journey. You will find in every town upon the road letters either

from

from your father or myself, informing you of what has happened, for which purpose we shall every day dispatch a fresh courier; and it is with the view of giving you an early account of our first success, that we have determined that Augusto should accompany us."

It was with great reluctance, however, and not without the interference of the count her father, that Selina acquiesced in Edmund's proposal; but when the carriage was announced, it was with difficulty that Edmund tore himself from her embraces; and whilst the coach rolled rapidly away, she gave herself up to her affliction and apprehensions, which old Marcelosa augmented instead of diminished, as she had intended, by the relation of a thousand disasters that occur to people on a journey.

The

The two first days passed on with almost insupportable slowness; but Selina's anxiety was at last relieved by the arrival of Augusto, with the following letter from her husband, dated at the Castle of Villa-Flora, at nine at night of the twenty-ninth of October 1755:—

“ We are just arrived, my dear Selina, and I hasten to acquaint you that our journey has been as prosperous as it was rapid. We collected an hundred alguazils in the different towns through which we passed; and your father is gone to the convent with fifty of them, for the purpose of arresting the abbess; or, if she is in the caverns, of following her thither through the Claudian chapel, whilst I am to meet him by the passage

passage out of the chapel of the Castle, on his sending me a message to that effect.

“ *Ten o'clock.*—The courier is arrived, You will see by your father's note, inclosed, that I am about to join him—that the decisive moment is at hand. Farewell, my adorable Selina! I depart with the delightful and well-founded hope of extricating our friends, and of seeing you soon afterwards.”

“ Theresa and Perpetua are not in the convent; no doubt they are concealed in the caverns. Hasten, my son, to enter them on your side—with prudence and celerity we may yet succeed.”

Such were the contents of the note
from

from the count de Montval to his son-in-law, who immediately sent Augusto to Lisbon, and proceeded to the execution of his design.

CHAPTER VIII.

SELINA, anxious to know the result of the researches in the caverns, left Lisbon the morning after the arrival of Augusto, attended by that faithful servant and the aged Marcelosa, who forgot her years and infirmities in the idea of again seeing her dear Villa-Flora, where she had passed the greatest part of her life.

It was about nine in the morning when Selina quitted Lisbon ; the atmosphere was extremely cloudy and heavy ; an offensive vapour exhaled from the ground; all nature was silent and gloomy, and

and Selina had not travelled above a mile when she heard a dreadful noise that seemed to proceed from the bowels of the earth. It was instantly followed by such violent shocks, that most of the houses and other buildings at Lisbon were thrown down with a frightful crash; in less than a minute that fine city was reduced to ruins—a cloud of smoke and dust arose where Lisbon had before been seen; the air resounded with the screams of the inhabitants, and the waters of the Tagus raged with fury, being driven back by the monstrous billows of the ocean. To complete the distress, the flames that broke forth amidst the ruins spread with such violence and rapidity, that they destroyed a great part of those edifices which had not been affected by the earthquake.

In

In the midst of Selina's consternation, she could not help considering herself as peculiarly favoured by Heaven, that had suffered her to escape from the theatre of death and desolation; but her heart was much afflicted by the ravages that had been everywhere committed by the earthquake. Every village had been injured by that tremendous scourge, and at every step she was surrounded by the sufferers bewailing the loss of a father, a child, a husband, or a wife, or regretting the demolition of the house where they had been born, and had lived so happy.

At the close of the day Selina reached a small town, where she found a messenger with the following letter from her husband, written upon the thirtieth of October 1755, at the Castle of Villa-Flora, at ten o'clock in the morning:—

" Oh,

" Oh, Selina! how shall I inform you of what has passed!—where shall I find fortitude sufficient to describe —Our friends are safe—But what accumulated horrors! Painful as is the task, I will, however, fulfil it for my Selina: but in order to connect the different occurrences that have taken place, I shall add what Florello has told me to the circumstances of which I myself have been a witness.

" Yesterday, as soon as Augusto had left me, I repaired with donna Lucia and my fifty alguazils to the chapel of the Castle, where we found the stone placed over the steps into the cavern, and carefully fastened down, so that some moments were employed in our efforts to remove it, which being accomplished, we all went down into the vault.

But

But I must now inform you of what happened to our friends after our separation at Belem.

" After the dissipation of the soporific which they had taken in the convent, and which Sebaldino had renewed during the journey, Florello and his bride, on opening their eyes, imagined that what they saw was the effect of some extraordinary illusion. Placed upon seats at some distance from each other, their hands were loaded with chains; in front of them was an elevated platform, on which stood a stately chair under a magnificent canopy, with three others less splendid on each side of it; and a table, covered with scarlet cloth, fringed with gold, was at a short distance: two immense candelabras, and several lighted

tapers, stood upon the table, and upon it were a cup and two glittering poniards.

" These formidable preparations were made in a spacious vault, that added to their terrible effect ; the low ceiling, partly fretted, and partly loaded with figures coarsely sculptured, denoted its antiquity. The attributes of death displayed themselves on all sides ; several monuments and tombstones of different kinds, covered with epitaphs in Gothic characters, were dispersed about the vault ; a great number of images, representing either armed men or women upon their knees, singularly arrayed, accompanied the generality of the monuments, and a few sepulchral lamps were suspended over them.

" Not knowing what to think of every thing

thing they had seen, Amelina and Florello, calling to mind what had passed in the convent at Belém, at first concluded that they were still in the vault where Pancrazio had exhibited his prodigies; but on farther examination, Amelina recollects the place of sepulture of her ancestors, which she had traversed on her visit to the caverns, and she was confirmed in her opinion by the sight of the tamtam, whose doleful sounds had at that time caused her such alarm.—

‘ My dear Florello,’ she exclaimed, ‘ let us make haste to fly; we are doubtless in the power of Theresa.’ But at that moment they heard the sound of approaching steps, and immediately there entered a man richly clad, and followed by several others. Good God! what was the consternation of Amelina when she dis-

eovered the man to be no other than the ferocious Sebaldino, whom she had concluded to have perished in the sea, and who now ordered his associates to conduct her and her husband before the platform !

“ Whilst this was performing, a woman, magnificently dressed, and covered with diamonds, placed herself upon the most elevated seat; her countenance was fierce —her eyes were haggard, and her features bore the impression of wickedness and vice.

“ The prisoners with terror recognised their implacable enemy, the imperious abbess of the Carmelites. Sebaldino seated himself near her, and Otho by his side ; but the amazement of our friends increased when they saw Pancrazio, the monk whom they had considered with such

such respect, approach, and place himself on the other side of the abbess.

"Three of the most distinguished amongst the banditti then took their places in the vacant chairs; they were all clothed in black, and a long red feather nodded over their velvet caps.

'Amelina! Florello! couple whom I abhor,' said the abbess, in a tone of austerity, 'tremble! for the moment of my vengeance is arrived! By your elopement from the convent of Santa Maria, you have injured my good name—you have for ever ruined me in the opinion of the public, which before was entirely in my favour. You have become acquainted with my crimes and the objects of my hatred, and that alone would be a sufficient offence in my eyes. By divulging my actions, you might sig-

nally revenge yourselves upon me: you have not done so; and I am now determined to prevent you, and to secure myself from all possible discovery. Count Sebaldino, count Stephani, are you of opinion that it is necessary to sacrifice them to the general safety of our society?

"Yes, yes," replied the pirate; "it is the only method of securing ourselves. Edmund has already paid with his life the knowledge of our secrets; let these undergo the same fate, and let donna Lucia also be involved in it."

"Panerazio, whom Amelina contemplated with horror on hearing him called by the name of Stephani, spoke not, but nodded in token of approbation.

"And you, brave warriors?" said Theresa, addressing herself to the banditti who

who surrounded her, ‘are you of the same opinion with your chief?’

‘We are, we are,’ was the reply; and Otho, with a ghastly smile, observed that at last his worthy friend Albert would be revenged.

‘Let them perish instantly!’ said the abbess; ‘I give them the choice of poison or the dagger.’

‘Antonio,’ said Sebaldino, ‘have you prepared the potion?’

‘Your orders have been obeyed,’ answered Antonio.

‘Give me the poison; I willingly devote myself to your vengeance,’ exclaimed Florello; ‘but if pity yet reside within your breasts, oh, save my wife—my Amelina!’

“The cup being instantly brought to

him, he carried it to his lips, and raising his eyes, first towards his bride, and then to heaven, hastily swallowed the liquor, whilst Amelina fell lifeless on the floor.

“ At that instant the lay sister Perpetua hastily ran in, with the intelligence that the convent was full of alguazils, and that not finding the abbess in the house, she had perceived them hurrying towards the caverns.

‘ Let Leontio be conveyed hither directly,’ cried Sebaldino; ‘ we must, at all events, make sure of his person.’

“ The unfortunate marquis of Villa-Flora was presently brought in by some of the banditti, whilst others attempted to oppose the entrance of the alguazils; but finding themselves too inferior in numbers

numbers to effect any adequate resistance, they fled along the various alleys in the cavern.

‘Let us escape by the Castle,’ said the abbess, on hearing the voices of the approaching alguazils.

‘Yes,’ answered Sebaldino, ‘but let us first dispatch Leontio and his daughter: the dead never come to life again, and if we do perish, we will at least taste the pleasure of sacrificing some others. As for young Lemos, nothing can save him—death already rages within his veins.’

“A great noise was then heard on the other side, occasioned by my descent into the vault, which the count de Montval and his party entered at the same time by an opposite door, and thus threw the banditti into confusion.

" "Seboldino seized Leontio, and threatened to dispatch him if we advanced; and the murderous abbess, fastening upon his daughter, who still continued in a fit, bared the bosom of Aimelia, and pointing a poniard at her breast, exclaimed that she would stab her if we offered to approach."

" Fiacello remained motionless.—Donna Lucia fainted in his arms, and we all seemed petrified with horror."

" In this critical situation, your father, who despaired of rescuing the prisoners, and at the same time of punishing the banditti, not only promised a pardon to them all, but solemnly declared that he would grant them whatever terms they chose, provided they would spare Leontio and his daughter."

" The criminals seemed disposed to accede

accade to these propositions, when an alguacil, impatient of delay, secretly drew nigh with the intention of seizing Sebaldino; but that daring and irritated monster, perceiving his design, gave a signal to the abbess, and both, as if by a spontaneous movement, plunged their poniards into the breasts of their victim:

“ We immediately attacked and secured the assassins. Sebaldino was severely wounded in defending himself; and conveyed to an apartment in the convent, as were the abbess and Perpetua, who were chained together, and deprived of the means of taking away their own lives.

“ The bloody bodies of Amelina and her father were cautiously carried into the castle, with donna Lucia and Flo-

rello, who were both in a state of apparent danger; and whilst a messenger was sent to Aveiro for surgical assistance, the alguazils secured all the banditti dispersed about the caverns, except Otho, whom they have not yet been able to discover.

“ Your father, my dear Selina, had, during this time, examined the wounds of the marquis and his daughter, and found that the former, having been struck upon the heart, had instantly expired, but that the poniard with which Amelina had been wounded had penetrated very little way into the flesh—that she had already shewn signs of returning animation, and that there were great hopes of her surviving the horrid projects of her enemies.

“ Donna Lucia was quickly restored
to

to her senses, but Florello continued in a state of stupor, and only expressed his wishes that he might not survive his Amelina.

“ One of the banditti having earnestly requested to speak to me, I now ordered him to be brought in, when he told me that his name was Antonio—that he was the person who had saved my life by disobeying Sebaldino’s directions to throw me into the Tagus, and that he had furnished me by letter with the means of delivering my friends.

“ Having ordered his irons to be taken off, and promised that I would amply recompense his services, he added that the segnor Florello had not been poisoned, for that instead of infusing the noxious drugs into the potion, as he had been

been directed by the abbess, he had filled the cup with a very innocent liquor.

" I hastened to communicate these happy tidings to Florello, and at the same time assured him that the surgeons had pronounced Antelina's wound to be by no means dangerous. After which, I informed her of Florello's safety, but concealed from her the unfortunate death of her father, whom she had not seen, and whom she concludes to have been long since dead; for as her fainting in the vault had prevented her from seeing him, and witnessing his melancholy end, we have agreed that she had better for ever remain ignorant of that terrible catastrophe.

" I promised that Florello should visit her in the course of the day; and when

her

her wound was dressed, she had the pleasure of embracing both him and donna Lucia, who found herself scarcely able to suppress the affliction which the massacre of her unhappy brother had occasioned.

"The wounds of the execrable Sebaldino not being mortal, he and his wicked brother Stephani will receive upon the scaffold the punishment due to the enormity of their crimes.

"The abbess is to be shut up in the prisons of the holy office, from whence she will emerge to form the principal ornament of the next *auto da fé*, a punishment which I cannot help thinking is far too mild for her accumulated crimes.

"Adieu, my Selina! dearest object of
my

my affections! You will receive another letter from me before we meet.

"P. S.—I am just told that Stephani, at the age of eighty years, stained with the most atrocious wickedness, has mortally wounded himself with a knife he had concealed amongst his clothes."

This letter redoubled Selina's impatience to join her husband, her father, and her friends, and proceeding on her journey, she the next evening received and perused with avidity the following letter from her Vellanès:—

"Aveiro,

"Aveiro, 1st November 1755.

"Events not less extraordinary than the preceding, my dear Selina, have occurred since I last wrote to you. We had interred the marquis of Villa-Flora in the monument he had caused to be constructed in his chapel; Sebaldino and his troop of banditti had been conveyed to the prisons of Aveiro; we had retained only a few alguazils for the purpose of escorting the abbess and Perpetua to the dungeons of the Inquisition at Coimbra, and we were taking the necessary repose after our fatigues, when I was suddenly awakened by a frightful noise, and the alarming cry of 'fire!'

"On running to the window, and seeing the flames rising on every side, I hurried to your father's room, and not finding

finding him, descended into the court, where I saw him assisting donna Lucia, whom he had saved from the fire that had already penetrated into her apartment.

"The surgeons who attended Amélia now conveyed her into the court; but Florello was still absent, and I was on the point of rushing through the flames to his assistance, when he came out of the chapel, whither he had found his way by means of a private staircase connected with the grand gallery of the castle.

"When we were assembled in the court, Amélia was placed in a litter, and conveyed to Aveiro, followed by Florello and all her other friends, except myself, for I wished to see if it were possible

possible to check the fury of the conflagration, and save the remainder of the Castle.

"Whilst I was taking measures with the servants for that purpose, two of the alguazils, who accompanied the party towards Aveiro, having perceived a man of suspicious appearance flying from the Castle, pursued and apprehended him; and brought him immediately to me.

"He proved to be the perfidious Otho, the only ruffian who had hitherto escaped, and who lay concealed in the cavern until night, when he set fire to the Castle in several places, in the hope, as he confessed, that we might all perish in the flames.

"He had no sooner made this horrible avowal, than, in spite of my exertions,

tions, the alguazils threw him into the fire, where he perished.

“ It being impossible to succour the abbess and Perpetua, they also were devoured by the conflagration, and thus avoided the ignominy of a public execution.

“ We had given up all hopes of extinguishing the fire, when we felt a violent shock of an earthquake. The half-consumed walls of the Castle yielded to its impulse, and, by their sudden fall, the progress of the flames was stopped ; but scarcely one stone remains upon another, and the caverns have been nearly choked up by the earthquake.

“ Passing by Santa Maria, in my way to Aveiro, I found that the convent had been likewise greatly injured by the shock,

shock, and that the nuns, who were at prayers, had been all crushed to death by the falling in of the church roof.

“The town of Aveiro has happily escaped the effects of the earthquake: you will find us all there in the house formerly occupied by my poor mother, and nothing is now wanting to complete our happiness but your arrival; but to-morrow we shall have that satisfaction, and as I intend meeting you upon the road, I shall now bid you farewell.”

The reunion that soon succeeded to this letter was gratifying in proportion to the dangers from which the several parties had escaped: but the fatal death of the marquis of Villa-Flora was long present to the mind of Florello, and
donna

donna Lucia could never thoroughly efface it from her recollection.

Sebaldino and his associates were all condemned to be burned, and this terrible though just punishment was executed in the market-place of Aveiro.

Antonio was handsomely rewarded, and a small farm near Villa-Flora, that was bestowed upon him by Florello and Amelina, contributed to his adoption of a life of integrity, from which he never afterwards swerved.

When Amelina was perfectly recovered, she went to Madrid with her husband, who soon after sold all his property in Spain, with the intention of rebuilding the Castle of Villa-Flora, in the neighbourhood of which they prevailed on Edmund and his father-in-law to fix.

Whilst they were all settling their several

several concerns, Selina increased the happiness of her family by presenting her husband with a son, who was called Theodore, after his godfather, the count de Montval.

The aged and faithful Marcelosa died about the same time, full of days, and weighed down by infirmities, but rejoicing at having been permitted to see the happiness of the young heiress of Villa-Flora.

Amelina gave birth to a daughter, who bore the name of Clementia, from her unhappy grandmother, and who was destined from the cradle to be the wife of Theodore; and this union, which their parents had so early formed, was afterwards realized by its consequences, and added to the comfort of both families.

The count de Montval, after some time,

time, overcame donna Lucia's repugnance to marriage, and received her hand at the altar: their age protected them from the remarks of the satirical; they had formed the alliance not from love, but for the sole purpose of having the comfortable certitude of passing the remainder of their days together.

Florello caused a cenotaph of white marble to be erected in a small grove of cypresses and cedars in the garden of the count de Montval, to the memory of Leontio and Clementia, with the inscription which the former had dictated in his manuscript. The cinerary urn that crowned the monument was overshadowed by weeping willows, and the whole scenery was admirably calculated to inspire meditation and regret, and that sort of tranquil melancholy so pleasing

ing to the mind; nor could any one enter the grove without being affected by the recollection of the misfortunes of those to whom it had been consecrated.

The count and countess de Montval lived to an advanced age, and at almost the same period bade adieu to the pains and pleasures of this world. Edmund and Selina, Florello and Amelina, still enjoy that happiness which results from a life of innocence and virtue. Their children now add to the comforts of their old age; nor has the destructive torrent of a bloody revolution disturbed their tranquillity and retirement.

Thus, after having been exposed to all the perils of a stormy life, they have had the good fortune to surmount them. The evils they had endured were indeed terrible, and of long continuance; but

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they agree in opinion, that they have not purchased at too dear a rate the charms of their present situation, and an uninterrupted succession of enjoyments.

FINIS.

